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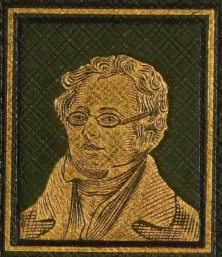

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THE

LITERARY CHARACTER;

OR THE HISTORY OF

MEN OF GENIUS,

Drawn from their own Feelings and Confessions.

LITERARY MISCELLANIES:

AND AN INQUIRY INTO

THE CHARACTER OF JAMES THE FIRST.

BY

ISAAC DISRAELI.

EDITED BY HIS SON,

THE RIGHT HON. B. DISRAELI.

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1881.

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Cambridge.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE following Preface was prefixed to an Edition of the author's Miscellaneous Works in 1840. They were comprised in a thick 8vo volume, and included the CALAMITIES AND QUARRELS OF AUTHORS, now published separately. This Preface is of interest for the expression of the author's own view of these works.

THIS volume comprises my writings on subjects chiefly of our vernacular literature. Now collected together, they offer an unity of design, and afford to the general reader and to the student of classical antiquity some initiation into our national Literature. It is presumed also, that they present materials for thinking not solely on literary topics; authors and books are not alone here treated of,—a comprehensive view of human nature necessarily enters into the subject from the diversity of the characters portrayed, through the gradations of their faculties, the influence of their tastes, and those incidents of their lives prompted by their fortunes or their passions. This present volume, with its brother "CURIOSITIES OF LITERATURE," now constitute a body of reading which may awaken knowledge in minds only seeking amusement, and refresh the deeper studies of the learned by matters not unworthy of their curiosity.

The LITERARY CHARACTER has been an old favourite with many of my contemporaries departed or now living, who have found it respond to their own emotions.

THE MISCELLANIES are literary amenities, should they be found to deserve the title, constructed on that principle early adopted by me, of interspersing facts with speculation.

THE INQUIRY INTO THE LITERARY AND POLITICAL CHARACTER OF JAMES THE FIRST has surely corrected some general misconceptions, and thrown light on some obscure points in the history of that anomalous personage. It is a satisfaction to me to observe, since the publication of this tract, that while some competent judges have considered the "evidence irresistible," a material change has occurred in the tone of most writers.

The subject presented an occasion to exhibit a minute picture of that age of transition in our national history.

The titles of CALAMITIES OF AUTHORS and QUARRELS OF AUTHORS do not wholly designate the works, which include a considerable portion of literary history.

Public favour has encouraged the republication of these various works, which often referred to, have long been difficult to procure. It has been deferred from time to time with the intention of giving the subjects a more enlarged investigation; but I have delayed the task till it cannot be performed. One of the Calamities of Authors falls to my lot, the delicate organ of vision with me has suffered a singular disorder,*—a disorder which no oculist by his touch can heal, and no physician by his experience can expound; so much remains concerning the frame of man unrevealed to man!

In the midst of my library I am as it were distant from it. My unfinished labours, frustrated designs, remain paralysed. In a joyous heat I wander no longer through the wide circuit before me. The "strucken deer" has the sad privilege to weep when he lies down, perhaps no more to course amid those far-distant woods where once he sought to range.

Although thus compelled to refrain in a great measure from all mental labour, and incapacitated from the use of the pen and the book, these works, notwithstanding, have received many important corrections, having been read over to me with critical precision.

Amid this partial darkness I am not left without a distant hope, nor a present consolation; and to HER who has so often lent to me the light of her eyes, the intelligence of her voice, and the careful work of her hand, the author must ever owe "the debt immense" of paternal gratitude.

London, May, 1840.

* I record my literary calamity as a warning to my sedentary brothers. When my eyes dwell on any object, or whenever they are closed, there appear on a bluish film a number of mathematical squares, which are the reflection of the fine network of the retina, succeeded by blotches which subside into printed characters, apparently forming distinct words, arranged in straight lines as in a printed book; the monosyllables are often legible. This is the process of a few seconds. It is remarkable that the usual power of the eye is not injured or diminished for distant objects, while those near are clouded over.

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THE

LITERARY CHARACTER;

OR, THE

HISTORY OF MEN OF GENIUS,

DRAWN FROM THEIR OWN FEELINGS AND CONFESSIONS.

TO

ROBERT SOUTHEY, LL.D.,

&c., &c., &c.

In dedicating this work to one of the most eminent literary characters of the age, I am experiencing a peculiar gratification, in which, few, perhaps none, of my contemporaries can participate; for I am addressing him, whose earliest effusions attracted my regard, near half a century past; and during that awful interval of time—for fifty years is a trial of life of whatever may be good in us—you have multiplied your talents, and have never lost a virtue.

When I turn from the uninterrupted studies of your domestic solitude to our metropolitan authors, the contrast, if not encouraging, is at least extraordinary. You are not unaware that the revolutions of Society have operated on our literature, and that new classes of readers have called forth new classes of writers. The causes and the consequences of the present state of this fugitive literature might form an inquiry which would include some of the important topics which concern the PUBLIC MIND—but an inquiry which might be invidious shall not disturb a page consecrated to the record of excellence. They who draw their inspiration from the hour must not, however, complain if with that hour they pass away.

I. DISRAELI.

March, 1839,

PREFACE.

For the fifth time I revise a subject which has occupied my inquiries from early life, with feelings still delightful, and an enthusiasm not wholly diminished.

Had not the principle upon which this work is constructed occurred to me in my youth, the materials which illustrate the literary character could never have been brought together. It was in early life that I conceived the idea of pursuing the history of genius by the similar events which had occurred to men of genius. Searching into literary history for the literary character formed a course of experimental philosophy in which every new essay verified a former trial, and confirmed a former truth. By the great philosophical principle of induction, inferences were deduced and results established, which, however vague and doubtful in speculation, are irresistible when the appeal is made to facts as they relate to others, and to feelings which must be decided on as they are passing in our own breast.

It is not to be inferred from what I have here stated that I conceive that any single man of genius will resemble every man of genius; for not only man differs from man, but varies from himself in the different stages of human life. All that I assert is, that every man of genius will discover, sooner or later, that he belongs to the brotherhood of his class, and that he cannot escape from certain habits, and feelings, and disorders, which arise from the same temperament and sympathies, and are the necessary consequence of occupying the

same position, and passing through the same moral existence. Whenever we compare men of genius with each other, the history of those who are no more will serve as a perpetual commentary on our contemporaries. There are, indeed, secret feelings which their prudence conceals, or their fears obscure, or their modesty shrinks from, or their pride rejects; but I have sometimes imagined that I have held the clue as they have lost themselves in their own labyrinth. I know that many, and some of great celebrity, have sympathised with the feelings which inspired these volumes; nor, while I have elucidated the idiosyncrasy of genius, have I less studied the habits and characteristics of the lovers of literature.

It has been considered that the subject of this work might have been treated with more depth of metaphysical disquisition; and there has since appeared an attempt to combine with this investigation the medical science. A work, however, should be judged by its design, and its execution, and not by any preconceived notion of what it ought to be according to the critic, rather than the author. The nature of this work is dramatic rather than metaphysical. It offers a narration or a description; a conversation or a monologue; an incident or a scene.

Perhaps I have sometimes too warmly apologised for the infirmities of men of genius. From others we may hourly learn to treat with levity the man of genius because he is *only* such. Perhaps also I may have been too fond of the subject, which has been for me an old and a favourite one—I may have exalted the literary character beyond the scale by which society is willing to fix it. Yet what is this Society, so omnipotent, so all judicial? The society of to-day was not the society of yesterday. Its feelings, its thoughts, its manners, its rights, its wishes, and its wants, are different and are changed: alike changed or alike created by those very literary characters whom it rarely comprehends and often would despise. Let us no longer look upon this retired and

peculiar class as useless members of our busy race. There are mental as well as material labourers. The first are not less necessary; and as they are much rarer, so are they more precious. These are they whose "published labours" have benefited mankind—these are they whose thoughts can alone rear that beautiful fabric of social life, which it is the object of all good men to elevate or to support. To discover truth and to maintain it,—to develope the powers, to regulate the passions, to ascertain the privileges of man,—such have ever been, and such ever ought to be, the labours of AUTHORS! Whatever we enjoy of political and private happiness, our most necessary knowledge as well as our most refined pleasures, are alike owing to this class of men; and of these, some for glory, and often from benevolence, have shut themselves out from the very beings whom they love, and for whom they labour.

Upwards of forty years have elapsed since, composed in a distant county, and printed at a provincial press, I published "An Essay on the Manners and Genius of the Literary Char acter." To my own habitual and inherent defects were superadded those of my youth. The crude production was, however, not ill received, for the edition disappeared, and the subject was found more interesting than the writer.

During a long interval of twenty years, this little work was often recalled to my recollection by several, and by some who have since obtained celebrity. They imagined that their attachment to literary pursuits had been strengthened even by so weak an effort. An extraordinary circumstance concurred with these opinions. A copy accidentally fell into my hands which had formerly belonged to the great poetical genius of our times; and the singular fact, that it had been more than once read by him, and twice in two subsequent years at Athens, in 1810 and 1811, instantly convinced me that the volume deserved my renewed attention.

It was with these feelings that I was again strongly at-

tracted to a subject from which, indeed, during the course of a studious life, it had never been long diverted. The consequence of my labours was the publication, in 1818, of an octavo volume, under the title of "The Literary Character, illustrated by the History of Men of Genius, drawn from their own feelings and confessions."

In the preface to this edition, in mentioning the fact respecting Lord Byron, which had been the immediate cause of its publication, I added these words: "I tell this fact assuredly not from any little vanity which it may appear to betray;—for the truth is, were I not as liberal and as candid in respect to my own productions, as I hope I am to others, I could not have been gratified by the present circumstance; for the marginal notes of the noble author convey no flattery; —but amidst their pungency, and sometimes their truth, the circumstance that a man of genius could reperuse this slight effusion at two different periods of his life, was a sufficient authority, at least for an author, to return it once more to the anvil."

Some time after the publication of this edition of "The Literary Character," which was in fact a new work, I was shown, through the kindness of an English gentleman lately returned from Italy, a copy of it, which had been given to him by Lord Byron, and which again contained marginal notes by the noble author. These were peculiarly interesting, and were chiefly occasioned by observations on his character, which appeared in the work.

In 1822 I published a new edition of this work, greatly enlarged, and in two volumes. I took this opportunity of inserting the manuscript Notes of Lord Byron, with the exception of one, which, however characteristic of the amiable feelings of the noble poet, and however gratifying to my own, I had no wish to obtrude on the notice of the public.*

* As everything connected with the reading of a mind like Lord Byron's is interesting to the philosophical inquirer, this note may now be preserved. On

Soon after the publication of this third edition, I received the following letter from his lordship :

"MONTENERO, VILLA DUPUY, NEAR LEGHORN, *June* 10, 1822.

"DEAR SIR,—If you will permit me to call you so,—I had some time ago taken up my pen at Pisa, to thank you for the present of your new edition of the 'Literary Character,' which has often been to me a consolation, and always a pleasure. I was interrupted, however, partly by business, and partly by vexation of different kinds,—for I have not very long ago lost a child by fever, and I have had a good deal of petty trouble with the laws of this lawless country, on account of the prosecution of a servant for an attack upon a cowardly scoundrel of a dragoon, who drew his sword upon some unarmed Englishmen, and whom I had done the honour to mistake for an officer, and to treat like a gentleman. He turned out to be neither,—like many other with medals, and in uniform; but he paid for his brutality with a severe and dangerous wound, inflicted by nobody knows whom, for, of three suspected, and two arrested, they have been able to identify neither; which is strange, since he was wounded in the presence of thousands, in a public street, during a feast-day and full promenade. But to return to things more analogous to the 'Literary Character,' I wish to say, that had I known that the book was to fall into your hands, or that the MS. notes you have thought worthy of publication would have attracted your attention, I would have made them more copious, and perhaps not so careless.

"I really cannot know whether I am, or am not, the genius you are pleased to call me,—but I am very willing to put up with the mistake, if it be one. It is a title dearly enough bought by most men, to render it endurable, even when not quite clearly made out, which it never *can* be, till the Posterity,

that passage of the Preface of the second Edition which I have already quoted, his Lordship was thus pleased to write:

"I was wrong, but I was young and petulant, and probably wrote down any thing, little thinking that those observations would be betrayed to the author, whose abilities I have always respected, and whose works in general I have read oftener than perhaps those of any English author whatever, except such as trea of Turkey."

whose decisions are merely dreams to ourselves, have sanctioned or denied it, while it can touch us no further.

"Mr. Murray is in possession of a MS. memoir of mine (not to be published till I am in my grave), which, strange as it may seem, I never read over since it was written, and have no desire to read over again. In it I have told what, as far as I know, is the *truth—not the whole* truth—for if I had done so, I must have involved much private, and some dissipated history: but, nevertheless, nothing but truth, as far as regard for others permitted it to appear.

"I do not know whether you have seen those MSS.; but, as you are curious in such things as relate to the human mind, I should feel gratified if you had. I also sent him (Murray), a few days since, a Common-place Book, by my friend Lord Clare, containing a few things, which may perhaps aid his publication in case of his surviving me. If there are any questions which you would like to ask me, as connected with your philosophy of the literary mind (*if* mine be a literary mind), I will answer them fairly, or give a reason for *not*, good—bad—or indifferent. At present, I am paying the penalty of having helped to spoil the public taste; for, as long as I wrote in the false exaggerated style of youth, and the times in which we live, they applauded me to the very echo; and within these few years, when I have endeavoured at better things, and written what I suspect to have the principle of duration in it: the Church, the Chancellor, and all men, even to my grand patron, Francis Jeffrey, Esq., of the *Edinburgh Review*, have risen up against me, and my later publications. Such is Truth! men dare not look her in the face, except by degrees; they mistake her for a Gorgon, instead of knowing her to be Minerva. I do not mean to apply this mythological simile to my own endeavours, but I have only to turn over a few pages of your volumes to find innumerable and far more illustrious instances. It is lucky that I am of a temper not to be easily turned aside, though by no means difficult to irritate. But I am making a dissertation, instead of writing a letter. I write to you from the Villa Dupuy, near Leghorn, with the islands of Elba and Corsica visible from my balcony, and my old friend the Mediterranean rolling blue at my feet. As long as I retain my feeling and my passion for Nature, I can

partly soften or subdue my other passions, and resist or endure those of others.

"I have the honour to be, truly,

"Your obliged and faithful servant,

"NOEL BYRON.

"To I. D'ISRAELI, Esq."

The ill-starred expedition to Greece followed this letter.

This work, conceived in youth, executed by the research of manhood, and associated with the noblest feelings of our nature, is an humble but fervent tribute, offered to the memory of those Master Spirits from whose labours, as BURKE eloquently describes, "their country receives permanent service: those who know how to make the silence of their closets more beneficial to the world than all the noise and bustle of courts, senates, and camps."

THE

LITERARY CHARACTER.

CHAPTER I.

Of Literary Characters, and of the Lovers of Literature and Art.

DIFFUSED over enlightened Europe, an order of men has arisen, who, uninfluenced by the interests or the passions which give an impulse to the other classes of society, are connected by the secret links of congenial pursuits, and, insensibly to themselves, are combining in the same common labours, and participating in the same divided glory. In the metropolitan cities of Europe the same authors are now read, and the same opinions become established: the Englishman is familiar with Machiavel and Montesquieu; the Italian and the Frenchman with Bacon and Locke; and the same smiles and tears are awakened on the banks of the Thames, of the Seine, or of the Guadalquivir, by Shakspeare, Molière, and Cervantes—

> Contemporains de tous les hommes,
> Et citoyens de tous les lieux.

A khan of Tartary admired the wit of Molière, and discovered the Tartuffe in the Crimea; and had this ingenious sovereign survived the translation which he ordered, the immortal labour of the comic satirist of France might have laid the foundation of good taste

even among the Turks and the Tartars. We see the Italian Pignotti referring to the opinion of an English critic, Lord Bolingbroke, for decisive authority on the peculiar characteristics of the historian Guicciardini: the German Schlegel writes on our Shakspeare like a patriot; and while the Italians admire the noble scenes which our Flaxman has drawn from their great poet, they have rejected the feeble attempts of their native artists. Such is the wide and the perpetual influence of this living intercourse of literary minds.

Scarcely have two centuries elapsed since the literature of every nation was limited to its fatherland, and men of genius long could only hope for the spread of their fame in the single language of ancient Rome; which for them had ceased to be natural, and could never be popular. It was in the intercourse of the wealth, the power, and the novel arts of the nations of Europe, that they learned each other's languages; and they discovered that, however their manners varied as they arose from their different customs, they participated in the same intellectual faculties, suffered from the same wants, and were alive to the same pleasures; they perceived that there were no conventional fashions, nor national distinctions, in abstract truths and fundamental knowledge. A new spirit seems to bring them nearer to each other: and, as if literary Europe were intent to form but one people out of the populace of mankind, they offer their reciprocal labours; they pledge to each other the same opinions; and that knowledge which, like a small river, takes its source from one spot, at length mingles with the ocean-stream common to them all.

But those who stand connected with this literary community are not always sensible of the kindred alliance; even a genius of the first order has not always been aware that he is the founder of a society, and that there

will ever be a brotherhood where there is a father-genius.

These literary characters are partially, and with a melancholy colouring, exhibited by Johnson. "To talk in private, to think in solitude, to inquire or to answer inquiries, is the business of a scholar. He wanders about the world without pomp or terror; and is neither known nor valued but by men like himself." Thus thought this great writer during those sad probationary years of genius when

Slow rises worth, by *poverty* depress'd;

not yet conscious that he himself was devoting his days to cast the minds of his contemporaries and of the succeeding age in the mighty mould of his own; Johnson was of that order of men whose individual genius becomes that of a people. A prouder conception rose in the majestic mind of Milton, of "that lasting fame and perpetuity of praise which God and good men have consented shall be the reward of those whose PUBLISHED LABOURS advanced the good of mankind."

The LITERARY CHARACTER is a denomination which, however vague, defines the pursuits of the individual, and separates him from other professions, although it frequently occurs that he is himself a member of one. Professional characters are modified by the change of manners, and are usually national; while the literary character, from the objects in which it concerns itself, retains a more permanent, and necessarily a more independent nature.

Formed by the same habits, and influenced by the same motives, notwithstanding the contrast of talents and tempers, and the remoteness of times and places, the literary character has ever preserved among its followers the most striking family resemblance. The passion for study, the delight in books, the desire of solitude and

celebrity, the obstructions of human life, the character of their pursuits, the uniformity of their habits, the triumphs and the disappointments of literary glory, were as truly described by Cicero and the younger Pliny as by Petrarch and Erasmus, and as they have been by Hume and Gibbon. And this similarity, too, may equally be remarked with respect to that noble passion of the lovers of literature and of art for collecting together their mingled treasures; a thirst which was as insatiable in Atticus and Peiresc as in our Cracherode and Townley.* We trace the feelings of our literary contemporaries in all ages, and among every people who have ranked with nations far advanced in civilization; for among these may be equally observed both the great artificers of knowledge and those who preserve unbroken the vast chain of human acquisitions. The one have stamped the images of their minds on their works, and the others have preserved the circulation of this intellectual coinage, this

> Gold of the dead,
> Which Time does still disperse, but not devour.

* The Rev. C. M. Cracherode bequeathed at his death, in 1799, to the British Museum, the large collection of literature, art, and virtu he had employed an industrious life in collecting. His books numbered nearly 4500 volumes, many of great rarity and value. His drawings, many by early Italian masters, and all rare or curious, were deposited in the print-room of the same establishment; his antiquities, &c., were in a similar way added to the other departments. The "Townley Gallery" of classic sculpture was purchased of his executors by Government for 28,200*l.* It had been collected with singular taste and judgment, as well as some amount of good fortune also; Townley resided at Rome during the researches on the site of Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli; and he had for aids and advisers Sir William Hamilton, Gavin Hamilton, and other active collectors; and was the friend and correspondent of D'Hancarville and Winckelmann.—Ed.

CHAPTER II.

Of the Adversaries of Literary Men among themselves.—Matter-of-fact Men, and Men of Wit.—The Political Economists.—Of those who abandon their studies.—Men in office.—The arbiters of public opinion.—Those who treat the pursuits of literature with levity.

THE pursuits of literature have been openly or insidiously lowered by those literary men who, from motives not always difficult to penetrate, are eager to confound the ranks in the republic of letters, maliciously conferring the honours of authorship on that "Ten Thousand" whose recent list is not so much a muster-roll of heroes as a table of population.*

Matter-of-fact men, or men of knowledge, and men of wit and taste, were long inimical to each other's pursuits.† The Royal Society in its origin could hardly support itself against the ludicrous attacks of literary men,‡ and

* We have a Dictionary of "Ten Thousand living Authors" of our own nation. The alphabet is fatal by its juxtapositions. In France, before the Revolution, they counted about twenty thousand writers. When David would have his people numbered, Joab asked, "Why doth my lord delight in this?" In political economy, the population returns may be useful, provided they be correct; but in the literary republic, its numerical force diminishes the strength of the empire. "There you are numbered, we had rather you were weighed." Put aside the puling infants of literature, of whom such a mortality occurs in its nurseries; such as the writers of the single sermon, the single law-tract, the single medical dissertation, &c.; all writers whose subject is single, without being singular; count for nothing the inefficient mob of mediocrists; and strike out our literary *charlatans;* and then our alphabet of men of genius will not consist, as it now does, of the four-and-twenty letters.

† The cause is developed in the chapter on "Want of Mutual Esteem."

‡ See Butler, in his "Elephant in the Moon." South, in his oration at the opening of the theatre at Oxford, passed this bitter sarcasm on the naturalists,—"*Mirantur nihil nisi pulices, pediculos—et se ipsos;*"

the Antiquarian Society has afforded them amusement.* Such partial views have ceased to contract the understanding. Science yields a new substance to literature; literature combines new associations for the votaries of knowledge. There is no subject in nature, and in the history of man, which will not associate with our feelings and our curiosity, whenever genius extends its awakening hand. The antiquary, the naturalist, the architect, the chemist, and even writers on medical topics, have in our days asserted their claims, and discovered their long-interrupted relationship with the great family of genius and literature.

A new race of jargonists, the barbarous metaphysicians of political economy, have struck at the essential existence of the productions of genius in literature and art; for, appreciating them by their own standard, they have miserably degraded the professors. Absorbed in the contemplation of material objects, and rejecting whatever does not enter into their own restricted notion of "utility," these cold arithmetical seers, with nothing but millions in their imagination, and whose choicest works of art are spinning-jennies, have valued the intellectual tasks of the library and the studio by "the de-

—nothing they admire but fleas, lice, and themselves! The illustrious Sloane endured a long persecution from the bantering humour of Dr. King. One of the most amusing declaimers against what he calls *les Sciences des faux Sçavans* is Father Malebranche; he is far more severe than Cornelius Agrippa, and he long preceded Rousseau, so famous for his invective against the sciences. The seventh chapter of his fourth book is an inimitable satire. "The principal excuse," says he, "which engages men in *false studies*, is, that they have attached the *idea of learned* where they should not." Astronomy, antiquarianism, history, ancient poetry, and natural history, are all mowed down by his metaphysical scythe. When we become acquainted with the *idea* Father Malebranche attaches to the term *learned*, we understand him—and we smile.

* See the chapter on "Puck the Commentator," in the "Curiosities of Literature," vol. iii.; also p. 304 of the same volume.

mand and the supply." They have sunk these pursuits into the class of what they term "unproductive labour;" and by another result of their line and level system, men of letters, with some other important characters, are forced down into the class "of buffoons, singers, opera-dancers," &c. In a system of political economy it has been discovered that "that *unprosperous race* of men, called *men of letters*, must *necessarily* occupy their present *forlorn state* in society much as formerly, when a scholar and a beggar seem to have been terms very nearly synonymous."* In their commercial, agricultural, and manufacturing view of human nature, addressing society by its most pressing wants and its coarsest feelings, these theorists limit the moral and physical existence of man by speculative tables of population, planing and levelling society down in their carpentry of human nature. They would yoke and harness the loftier spirits to one common and vulgar destination. Man is considered only as he wheels on the the wharf, or as he spins in the factory; but man, as a recluse being of meditation, or impelled to action by more generous passions, has been struck out of the system of our political economists. It is, however, only among their "unproductive labourers" that we shall find those men of leisure, whose habitual pursuits are consumed in the development of thought and the gradual ascessions of knowledge; those men of whom the sage of Judea declares, that "It is he who hath little business who shall become wise: how can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough, and whose talk is of bullocks? But THEY,"—the men of leisure and study,—"WILL MAINTAIN THE STATE OF THE WORLD!" The prosperity and the happiness of a people include something more evident and more permanent than "the Wealth of a Nation."†

* "Wealth of Nations," i. 182.

† Since this murmur has been uttered against the degrading views of some of those theorists, it afforded me pleasure to observe that Mr.

There is a more formidable class of men of genius who are heartless to the interests of literature. Like Cornelius Agrippa, who wrote on "the vanity of the arts and sciences," many of these are only tracing in the arts which they have abandoned their own inconstant tempers, their feeble tastes, and their disordered judgments. But, with others of this class, study has usually served as the instrument, not as the object, of their ascent; it was the ladder which they once climbed, but it was not the eastern star which guided and inspired. Such literary characters were Warburton,* Watson, and Wilkes, who abandoned their studies when their studies had served a purpose.

Watson gave up his pursuits in chemistry the instant he obtained their limited reward, and the laboratory closed when the professorship was instituted. Such was the penurious love he bore for the science which he had

Malthus has fully sanctioned its justness. On this head, at least, Mr. Malthus has amply confuted his stubborn and tasteless brothers. Alluding to the productions of genius, this writer observes, that, "to estimate the value of Newton's discoveries, or the delight communicated by Shakspeare and Milton, by the *price* at which their works have sold, would be but a poor measure of the degree in which they have elevated and enchanted their country."—*Principles of Pol. Econ.*, p. 48. And hence he acknowledges, that "*some unproductive labour is of much more use and importance* than productive labour, but is incapable of being the subject of the gross calculations which relate to national wealth; contributing to *other sources of happiness* besides those which are derived from matter." Political economists would have smiled with contempt on the querulous Porson, who once observed, that "it seemed to him very hard, that with all his critical knowledge of Greek, he could not get a hundred pounds." They would have demonstrated to the learned Grecian, that this was just as it ought to be; the same occurrence had even happened to Homer in his own country, where Greek ought to have fetched a higher price than in England; but, that both might have obtained this hundred pounds, had the Grecian bard and the Greek professor been employed at the same stocking-frame together, instead of the "Iliad."

* For a full disquisition of the character and career of Warburton, see the essay in "Quarrels of Authors."

adopted, that the extraordinary discoveries of thirty years subsequent to his own first essays could never excite even an idle inquiry. He tells us that he preferred "his larches to his laurels:" the wretched jingle expressed the mere worldliness that dictated it. In the same spirit of calculation with which he had at first embraced science and literature, he abandoned them; and his ingenuous confession is a memorable example of that egotistic pride which betrayed in the literary character the creature of selfism and political ambition.

We are accustomed to consider Wilkes merely as a political adventurer, and it may surprise to find this "city chamberlain" ranked among professed literary characters: yet in his variable life there was a period when he cherished the aspirations of a votary. Once he desired Lloyd to announce the edition of Churchill, which he designed to enrich by a commentary; and his correspondence on this subject, which has never appeared, would, as he himself tells us, afford a variety of hints and communications. Wilkes was then warmed by literary glory; for on his retirement into Italy, he declared, "I mean to give myself entirely to our friend's work, and to my History of England. I wish to equal the dignity of Livy: I am sure the greatness and majesty of our nation demand an historian equal to him." They who have only heard of the intriguing demagogue, and witnessed the last days of the used voluptuary, may hardly imagine that Wilkes had ever cherished such elevated projects; but mob-politics made this adventurer's fortune, which fell to the lot of an epicurean: and the literary glory he once sought he lived to ridicule, in the immortal diligence of Lord Chatham and of Gibbon. Dissolving life away, and consuming all his feelings on himself, Wilkes left his nearest relatives what he left the world—the memory of an anti-social being! This wit, who has bequeathed to us no wit; this man of genius,

who has formed no work of genius; this bold advocate for popular freedom, who sunk his patriotism in the chamberlainship; was indeed desirous of leaving behind him some trace of the life of an *escroc* in a piece of autobiography, which, for the benefit of the world, has been thrown to the flames.

Men who have ascended into office through its gradations, or have been thrown upwards by accident, are apt to view others in a cloud of passions and politics. They who once commanded us by their eloquence, come at length to suspect the eloquent; and in their "pride of office" would now drive us by that single force of despotism which is the corruption of political power. Our late great Minister, Pitt, has been reproached even by his friends for the contemptuous indifference with which he treated literary men. Perhaps Burke himself, long a literary character, might incur some portion of this censure, by involving the character itself in the odium of a monstrous political sect. These political characters resemble Adrian VI., who obtaining the tiara as the reward of his studies, afterwards persecuted literary men, and, say the Italians, dreaded lest his brothers might shake the Pontificate itself.*

Worst fares it with authors when minds of this cast become the arbiters of public opinion; for the greatest of writers may unquestionably be forced into ridiculous

* It has been suspected that Adrian VI. has been caluminated, for that this pontiff was only too sudden to begin the reform he meditated. But Adrian VI. was a scholastic whose austerity turned away with contempt from all ancient art, and was no brother to contemporary genius. He was one of the *cui bono* race, a branch of our political economists. When they showed him the Laocoön, Adrian silenced their raptures by the frigid observation, that all such things were *idola antiquorum:* and ridiculed the *amena letteratura* till every man of genius retreated from his court. Had Adrian's reign extended beyond its brief period, men of taste in their panic imagined that in his zeal the Pontiff would have calcined the fine statues of ancient art, to expedite the edifice of St. Peter.

attitudes by the well-known artifices practised by modern criticism. The elephant, no longer in his forest struggling with his hunters, but falling entrapped by a paltry snare, comes at length, in the height of ill-fortune, to dance on heated iron at the bidding of the pantaloon of a fair. Whatever such critics may plead to mortify the vanity of authors, at least it requires as much vanity to give effect to their own polished effrontery.* Scorn, sarcasm, and invective, the egotism of the vain, and the irascibility of the petulant, where they succeed in debilitating genius of the consciousness of its powers, are practising the witchery of that ancient superstition of "tying the knot," which threw the youthful bridegroom into utter despair by its ideal forcefulness.†

* Listen to a confession and a recantation of an illustrious sinner; the Coryphæus of the amusing and new-found art, or artifice, of modern criticism. In the character of Burns, the Edinburgh Reviewer, with his peculiar felicity of manner, attacked the character of the man of genius; but when Mr. Campbell vindicated his immortal brother with all the inspiration of the family feeling, our critic, who is one of those great artists who acquire at length the utmost indifference even for their own works, generously avowed that, "a certain tone of exaggeration is incidental *we fear to the sort of writing in which we are engaged.* Reckoning a little too much on the dulness of our readers, we are often led to *overstate our sentiments:* when a little *controversial warmth* is added to a little *love of effect,* an excess of colouring steals over the canvas, which ultimately offends no eye so much as our own." But what if this *love of effect* in the critic has been too often obtained at the entire cost of the literary characters, the fruits of whose studious days at this moment lie withering in oblivion, or whose genius the critic has deterred from pursuing the career it had opened for itself! To have silenced the learned, and to have terrified the modest, is the barbarous triumph of a Hun or a Vandal; and the vaunted freedom of the literary republic departed from us when the vacillating public blindly consecrated the edicts of the demagogues of literature, whoever they may be.

A reaction appears in the burlesque or bantering spirit. While one faction drives out another, the abuse of extraordinary powers is equally fatal. Thus we are consoled while we are afflicted, and we are protected while we are degraded.

† *Nouer l'aiguillette,* of which the extraordinary effect is described

That spirit of levity which would shake the columns of society, by detracting from or burlesquing the elevating principles which have produced so many illustrious men, has recently attempted to reduce the labours of literature to a mere curious amusement: a finished composition is likened to a skilful game of billiards, or a piece of music finely executed; and curious researches, to charades and other insignificant puzzles. With such, an author is an idler who will not be idle, amusing or fatiguing others who are completely so. The result of a work of genius is contracted to the art of writing; but this art is only its last perfection. Inspiration is drawn from a deeper source; enthusiasm is diffused through contagious pages; and without these movements of the soul, how poor and artificial a thing is that sparkling composition which flashes with the cold vibrations of mere art or artifice! We have been recently told, on critical authority, that "a great genius should never allow himself to be sensible to his own celebrity, nor deem his pursuits of much consequence, however important or successful." A sort of catholic doctrine, to mortify an author into a saint, extinguishing the glorious appetite of fame by one Lent all the year, and self-flagellation every day! Buffon and Gibbon, Voltaire and Pope,* who gave to literature all the cares, the industry, and the glory of their lives, assuredly were too "sensible to their celebrity, and deemed their pursuits of much consequence," particularly when "important and successful." The self-possession of great authors sustains their own genius by a sense of their own glory.

by Montaigne, is an Oriental custom still practised.—*Mr. Hobhouse's Journey through Albania*, p. 528.

* The claims of Pope to the title of a great poet were denied in the days of Byron; and occasioned a warm and noble defence of him by that poet. It has since been found necessary to do the same for Byron, whom some transcendentalists have attacked.—ED.

Such, then, are some of the domestic treasons of the literary character against literature—"Et tu, Brute!" But the hero of literature outlives his assassins, and might address them in that language of poetry and affection with which a Mexican king reproached his traitorous counsellors—"You were the feathers of my wings, and the eyelids of my eyes."

CHAPTER III.

Of artists, in the history of men of literary genius.—Their habits and pursuits analogous.—The nature of their genius is similar in their distinct works.—Shown by their parallel eras, and by a common end pursued by both.

ARTISTS and literary men, alike insulated in their studies, pass through the same permanent discipline; and thus it has happened that the same habits and feelings, and the same fortunes, have accompanied men who have sometimes unhappily imagined their pursuits not to be analogous.

> Let the artist share
> The palm; he shares the peril, and dejected
> Faints o'er the labour unapproved—alas!
> Despair and genius!—

The congenial histories of literature and art describe the same periodical revolutions and parallel eras. After the golden age of Latinity, we gradually slide into the silver, and at length precipitately descend into the iron. In the history of painting, after the splendid epoch of Raphael, Titian, and Correggio, we meet with pleasure the Carraccis, Domenichino, Guido, and Albano; as we read Paterculus, Quintilian, Seneca, Juvenal, and Silius Italicus, after their immortal masters, Cicero, Livy, Virgil, and Horace.

It is evident that Milton, Michael Angelo, and Handel,

belong to the same order of minds; the same imaginative powers, and the same sensibility, are only operating with different materials. Lanzi, the delightful historian of the *Storia Pittorica*, is prodigal of his comparisons of the painters with the poets; his delicacy of perception discerned the refined analogies which for ever unite the two sisters, and he fondly dwelt on the transplanted flowers of the two arts: "*Chi sente che sia Tibullo nel poetare sente chi sia Andrea* (*del Sarto*) *nel dipingere;*" he who feels what Tibullus is in poetry, feels what Andrea is in painting. Michael Angelo, from his profound conception of the terrible and the difficult in art, was called its Dante; from the Italian poet the Italian sculptor derived the grandeur of his ideas; and indeed the visions of the bard had deeply nourished the artist's imagination; for once he had poured about the margins of his own copy their ethereal inventions, in the rapid designs of his pen. And so Bellori informs us of a very curious volume in manuscript, composed by Rubens, which contained, among other topics concerning art, descriptions of the passions and actions of men, drawn from the poets, and demonstrated to the eye by the painters. Here were battles, shipwrecks, sports, groups, and other incidents, which were transcribed from Virgil and other poets, and by their side Rubens had copied what he had met with on those subjects from Raphael and the antique.*

The poet and the painter are only truly great by the mutual influences of their studies, and the jealousy of glory has only produced an idle contest. This old family-quarrel for precedence was renewed by our estimable President, in his brilliant "Rhymes on Art;" where he maintains that "the narrative of an action is not com-

* Rubens was an ardent collector of works of antique art; and in the "Curiosities of Literature," vol. iii., p. 398, will be found an interesting account of his museum at Antwerp.—ED.

parable to the action itself before the eyes;" while the enthusiast Barry considers painting "as poetry realised."* This error of genius, perhaps first caught from Richardson's bewildering pages, was strengthened by the extravagant principle adopted by Darwin, who, to exalt his solitary talent of descriptive poetry, asserted that "the essence of poetry was picture." The philosophical critic will find no difficulty in assigning to each sister-art her distinct province; and it is only a pleasing delirium, in the enthusiasm of artists, which has confused the boundaries of these arts. The dread pathetic story of Dante's "Ugolino," under the plastic hand of Michael Angelo, formed the subject of a basso-relievo; and Reynolds, with his highest effort, embodied the terrific conception of the poet as much as his art permitted: but assuredly both these great artists would never have claimed the precedence of the Dantesc genius, and might have hesitated at the rivalry.

Who has not heard of that one common principle which unites the intellectual arts, and who has not felt that the nature of their genius is similar in their distinct works? Hence curious inquiries could never decide whether the group of the Laocoön in sculpture preceded or was borrowed from that in poetry. Lessing conjectures that the sculptor copied the poet. It is evident that the agony of Laocoön was the common end where the sculptor and the poet were to meet; and we may observe that the artists in marble and in verse skilfully

*The late Sir Martin Archer Shee, P. R. A. This accomplished artist, who possessed a large amount of poetical and literary power, asks, "What is there of *intellectual* in the operations of the poet which the painter does not equal? What is there of *mechanical* which he does not surpass? The advantage which poetry possesses over painting in continued narration and successive impression, cannot be advanced as a peculiar merit of the poet, since it results from the nature of language, and is common to prose." Poetry he values as the earliest of arts, painting as the latest and most refined.—Ed.

adapted their variations to their respective art: the one having to prefer the *nude*, rejected the veiling fillet from the forehead, that he might not conceal its deep expression, and the drapery of the sacrificial robe, that he might display the human form in visible agony; but the other, by the charm of verse, could invest the priest with the pomp of the pontifical robe without hiding from us the interior sufferings of the human victim. We see they obtained by different means, adapted to their respective arts, that common end which each designed; but who will decide which invention preceded the other, or who was the greater artist?

This approximation of men apparently of opposite pursuits is so natural, that when Gesner, in his inspiring letter on landscape-painting,* recommends to the young painter a constant study of poetry and literature, the impatient artist is made to exclaim, "Must we combine with so many other studies those which belong to literary men? Must we read as well as paint?" "It is useless to reply to this question; for some important truths must be instinctively felt, perhaps the fundamental ones in the arts." A truly imaginative artist, whose enthusiasm was never absent when he meditated on the art he loved, Barry, thus vehemently broke forth: "Go home from the academy, light up your lamps, and exercise yourselves in the creative part of your art, with Homer, with Livy, and all the great characters, ancient and modern, for your companions and counsellors." This genial intercourse of literature with art may be proved by painters who have suggested subjects to poets, and poets who have selected them for painters. Goldsmith suggested the subject of the tragic and pathetic picture of Ugolino to the pencil of Reynolds.

*Few writers were so competent to instruct in art as Gesner, who was not only an author and a poet, but an artist who decorated his poems by designs as graceful as their subject.—ED.

All the classes of men in society have their peculiar sorrows and enjoyments, as they have their peculiar habits and characteristics. In the history of men of genius we may often open the secret story of their minds, for they have above others the privilege of communicating their own feelings; and every life of a man of genius, composed by himself, presents us with the experimental philosophy of the mind. By living with their brothers, and contemplating their masters, they will judge from consciousness less erroneously than from discussion; and in forming comparative views and parallel situations, they will discover certain habits and feelings, and find these reflected in themselves.

Sydenham has beautifully said, "Whoever describes a violet exactly as to its colour, taste, smell, form, and other properties, will find the description agree in most particulars with all the violets in the universe."

CHAPTER IV.

Of natural genius.—Minds constitutionally different cannot have an equal aptitude.—Genius not the result of habit and education.—Originates in peculiar qualities of the mind.—The predisposition of genius.—A substitution for the white paper of Locke.*

THAT faculty in art which individualises the artist, belonging to him and to no other, and which in a work forms that creative part whose likeness is not found

* In the second edition of this work in 1818, I touched on some points of this inquiry in the second chapter: I almost despaired to find any philosopher sympathise with the subject, so invulnerable, they imagine, are the entrenchments of their theories. I was agreeably surprised to find these ideas taken up in the *Edinburgh Review* for August, 1820, in an entertaining article on Reynolds. I have, no doubt profited by the perusal, though this chapter was prepared before I

in any other work—is it inherent in the constitutional dispositions of the Creator, or can it be formed by patient acquisition?

Astonished at their own silent and obscure progress, some have imagined that they have formed their genius solely by their own studies; when they generated, they conceived that they had acquired; and, losing the distinction between nature and habit, with fatal temerity the idolatry of philosophy substituted something visible and palpable, yet shaped by the most opposite fancies, called a Theory, for Nature herself! Men of genius, whose great occupation is to be conversant with the inspirations of Nature, made up a factitious one among themselves, and assumed that they could operate without the intervention of the occult original. But Nature would not be mocked; and whenever this race of idolaters have worked without her agency, she has afflicted them with the most stubborn sterility.

Theories of genius are the peculiar constructions of our own philosophical times; ages of genius had passed away, and they left no other record than their works; no preconcerted theory described the workings of the imagination to be without imagination, nor did they venture to teach how to invent invention.

The character of genius, viewed as the effect of habit and education, on the principle of the equality of the human mind, infers that men have an equal aptitude for the work of genius: a paradox which, with a more fatal one, came from the French school, and arose probably from an equivocal expression.

Locke employed the well-known comparison of the mind with "white paper void of all characters," to free his famous "Inquiry" from that powerful obstacle to his system, the absurd belief of "innate ideas," of notions of

met with that spirited vindication of "an inherent difference in the organs or faculties to receive impressions of any kind."

objects before objects were presented to observation. Our philosopher considered that this simple analogy sufficiently described the manner in which he conceived the impressions of the senses write themselves on the mind. His French pupils, the amusing Helvetius, or Diderot, for they were equally concerned in the paradoxical "L'Esprit," inferred that this blank paper served also as an evidence that men had *an equal aptitude for genius*, just as the blank paper reflects to us whatever characters we trace on it. This *equality of minds* gave rise to the same monstrous doctrine in the science of metaphysics which that of another verbal misconception, *the equality of men*, did in that of politics. The Scottish metaphysicians powerfully combined to illustrate the mechanism of the mind,—an important and a curious truth; for as rules and principles exist in the nature of things, and when discovered are only thence drawn out, genius unconsciously conducts itself by a uniform process; and when this process had been traced, they inferred that what was done by some men, under the influence of fundamental laws which regulate the march of the intellect, must also be in the reach of others, who, in the same circumstances, apply themselves to the same study. But these metaphysicians resemble anatomists, under whose knife all men are alike. They know the structure of the bones, the movement of the muscles, and where the connecting ligaments lie! but the invisible principle of life flies from their touch. It is the practitioner on the living body who studies in every individual that peculiarity of constitution which forms the idiosyncrasy.

Under the influence of such novel theories of genius, Johnson defined it as "A Mind of large general powers ACCIDENTALLY determined by some *particular direction*." On this principle we must infer that the reasoning Locke, or the arithmetical De Moivre, could have been

the musical and fairy Spenser.* This conception of the nature of genius became prevalent. It induced the philosophical Beccaria to assert that every individual had an equal degree of genius for poetry and eloquence; it runs through the philosophy of the elegant Dugald Stewart; and Reynolds, the pupil of Johnson in literature, adopting the paradox, constructed his automatic system on this principle of *equal aptitude.* He says, "this excellence, however expressed by genius, taste, or the gift of Heaven, I am confident may be *acquired.*" Reynolds had the modesty to fancy that so many rivals, unendowed by nature, might have equalled the magic of his own pencil: but his theory of industry, so essential to genius, yet so useless without it, too long stimulated the drudges of art, and left us without a Correggio or a Raphael! Another man of genius caught the fever of the new system. Currie, in his eloquent "Life of Burns," swells out the scene of genius to a startling magnificence; for he asserts that, "the talents necessary to the construction of an 'Iliad,' under different discipline and application, might have led armies to victory or kingdoms to prosperity; might have wielded the thunder of eloquence, or discovered and enlarged the sciences." All this we find in the *text;* but in the clear intellect of this man of genius a vast number of intervening difficulties started up, and in a copious *note* the numerous exceptions show that the assumed theory requires no other refutation than what the theorist

* It is more dangerous to define than to describe: a dry definition excludes so much, an ardent description at once appeals to our sympathies. How much more comprehensible our great critic becomes when he nobly describes genius, "as the power of mind that collects, combines, amplifies, and animates; the energy without which judgment is cold, and knowledge is inert!" And it is this POWER OF MIND, this primary faculty and native aptitude, which we deem may exist separately from education and habit, since these are often found unaccompanied by genius.

has himself so abundantly and so judiciously supplied. There is something ludicrous in the result of a theory of genius which would place Hobbes and Erasmus, those timid and learned recluses, to open a campaign with the military invention and physical intrepidity of a Marlborough; or conclude that the romantic bard of the "Fairy Queen," amidst the quickly-shifting scenes of his visionary reveries, could have deduced, by slow and patient watchings of the mind, the system and the demonstrations of Newton.

Such theorists deduce the faculty called genius from a variety of exterior or secondary causes: zealously rejecting the notion that genius may originate in constitutional dispositions, and be only a mode of the individual's existence, they deny that minds are differently constituted. Habit and education, being more palpable and visible in their operations, and progressive in the development of the intellectual faculties, have been imagined fully sufficient to make the creative faculty a subject of acquirement.

But when these theorists had discovered the curious fact, that we have owed to *accident* several men of genius, and when they laid open some sources which influenced genius in its progress, they did not go one step further, they did not inquire whether such sources and such accidents had ever supplied the *want of genius* in the individual. Effects were here again mistaken for causes. Could Spenser have kindled a poet in Cowley, Richardson a painter in Reynolds, and Descartes a metaphysician in Malebranche, if those master-minds, pointed out as having been such from *accident*, had not first received the indelible mint-stamp struck by the hand of Nature, and which, to give it a name, we may be allowed to call the *predisposition* of genius? The *accidents* so triumphantly held forth, which are imagined to have created the genius of these men, have occurred to a thousand who

have run the same career; but how does it happen that the multitude remain a multitude, and the man of genius arrives alone at the goal?

This theory, which long dazzled its beholders, was in time found to stand in contradiction with itself, and perpetually with their own experience. Reynolds pared down his decision in the progress of his lectures, often wavered, often altered, and grew more confused as he lived longer to look about him.* The infirm votaries of the new philosophy, with all their sources of genius open before them, went on multiplying mediocrity, while inherent genius, true to nature, still continued rare in its solitary independence.

Others have strenuously denied that we are born with any peculiar species of mind, and resolve the mysterious problem into *capacity*, of which men only differ in the degree. They can perceive no distinction between the poetical and the mathematical genius; and they conclude that a man of genius, possessing a general capacity, may become whatever he chooses, but is determined by his first acquired habit to be what he is.†

In substituting the term *capacity* for that of *genius*,

* I transcribe the last opinions of Mr. Edgeworth. "As to original genius, and the effect of education in forming taste or directing talent, the last revisal of his opinions was given by himself, in the introduction to the second edition of 'Professional Education.' He was strengthened in his belief that many of the great differences of intellect which appear in men, depend more upon the early cultivating the habit of attention than upon any disparity between the powers of one individual and another. Perhaps, he latterly allowed that there is more difference than he had formerly admitted between the *natural powers* of different persons; but not so great as is generally supposed." —*Edgeworth's Memoirs*, ii., 388.

† Johnson once asserted, that "the supposition of one man having more imagination, another more judgment, is not true; it is only one man has *more mind* than another. He who has vigour may walk to the east as well as the west, if he happens to turn his head that way." Godwin was persuaded that all genius is a mere *acquisition*, for he hints at "infusing it," and making it a thing "heritable." A

the origin or nature remains equally occult. How is it acquired, or how is it inherent? To assert that any man of genius may become what he wills, those most fervently protest against who feel that the character of genius is such that it cannot be other than it is; that there is an identity of minds, and that there exists an interior conformity as marked and as perfect as the exterior physiognomy. A Scotch metaphysician has recently declared that "Locke or Newton might have been as eminent poets as Homer or Milton, had they given themselves early to the study of poetry." It is well to know how far this taste will go. We believe that had these philosophers obstinately, against nature, persisted in the attempt, as some have unluckily for themselves, we should have lost two great philosophers, and have obtained two supernumerary poets.*

It would be more useful to discover another source of genius for philosophers and poets, less fallible than the gratuitous assumptions of these theorists. An adequate origin for peculiar qualities in the mind may be found in that constitutional or secret propensity which adapts some for particular pursuits and forms the *predisposition* of genius.

Not that we are bound to demonstrate what our adversaries have failed in proving; we may still remain ignorant of the nature of genius, and yet be convinced

reversion which has been missed by the many respectable dunces who have been sons of men of genius.

* This very Scotch metaphysician, at the instant he lays down this postulate, acknowledges that "Dr. Beattie had talents for a *poet*, but apparently not for a *philosopher*." It is amusing to learn another result of his ungenial metaphysics. This sage demonstrates and concludes in these words, "It will therefore be found, with little exception, that *a great poet is but an ordinary genius*." Let this sturdy Scotch metaphysician never approach Pegasus—he has to fear, not his wings, but his heels. If some have written on genius with a great deal too much, others have written without any.

that they have not revealed it. The phenomena of *predisposition* in the mind are not more obscure and ambiguous than those which have been assigned as the sources of genius in certain individuals. For is it more difficult to conceive that a person bears in his constitutional disposition a germ of native aptitude which is developing itself to a predominant character of genius, which breaks forth in the temperament and moulds the habits, than to conjecture that these men of genius could not have been such but from *accident*, or that they differ only in their *capacity?*

Every class of men of genius has distinct habits; all poets resemble one another, as all painters and all mathematicians. There is a conformity in the cast of their minds, and the quality of each is distinct from the other, and the very faculty which fits them for one particular pursuit, is just the reverse required for another. If these are truisms, as they may appear, we need not demonstrate that from which we only wish to draw our conclusion. Why does this remarkable similarity prevail through the classes of genius? Because each, in their favourite production, is working with the same appropriate organ. The poetical eye is early busied with imagery; as early will the reveries of the poetical mind be busied with the passions; as early will the painter's hand be copying forms and colours; as early will the young musician's ear wander in the creation of sounds, and the philosopher's head mature its meditations. It is then the aptitude of the appropriate organ, however it varies in its character, in which genius seems most concerned, and which is connatural and connate with the individual, and, as it was expressed in old days, is *born* with him. There seems no other source of genius; for whenever this has been refused by nature, as it is so often, no theory of genius, neither habit nor education, have ever supplied its want. To discriminate be-

tween the *habit* and the *predisposition* is quite impossible; because whenever great genius discovers itself, as it can only do by continuity, it has become a habit with the individual; it is the fatal notion of habit having the power of generating genius, which has so long served to delude the numerous votaries of mediocrity. Natural or native power is enlarged by art; but the most perfect art has but narrow limits, deprived of natural disposition.

A curious decision on this obscure subject may be drawn from an admirable judge of the nature of genius. Akenside, in that fine poem which forms its history, tracing its source, sang,

> From Heaven my strains begin, from Heaven descends
> The flame of genius to *the human breast.*

But in the final revision of that poem, which he left many years after, the bard has vindicated the solitary and independent origin of genius, by the mysterious epithet,

THE CHOSEN BREAST.

The veteran poet was, perhaps, schooled by the vicissitudes of his own poetical life, and those of some of his brothers.

Metaphors are but imperfect illustrations in metaphysical inquiries; usually they include too little or take in too much. Yet fanciful analogies are not willingly abandoned. The iconologists describe Genius as a winged child with a flame above its head; the wings and the flame express more than some metaphysical conclusions. Let me substitute for "the white paper" of Locke, which served the philosopher in his description of the operations of the senses on the mind, a less artificial substance. In the soils of the earth we may discover that variety of primary qualities which we believe to exist in human minds. The botanist and the geologist always find the nature of the strata indicative of

its productions; the meagre light herbage announces the poverty of the soil it covers, while the luxuriant growth of plants betrays the richness of the matrix in which the roots are fixed It is scarcely reasoning by analogy to apply this operating principle of nature to the faculties of men.

But while the origin and nature of that faculty which we understand by the term Genius remain still wrapt up in its mysterious bud, may we not trace its history in its votaries? If Nature overshadow with her wings her first causes, still the effects lie open before us, and experience and observation will often deduce from consciousness what we cannot from demonstration. If Nature, in some of her great operations, has kept back her last secrets; if Newton, even in the result of his reasonings, has religiously abstained from penetrating into her occult connexions, is it nothing to be her historian, although we cannot be her legislator?

CHAPTER V.

Youth of genius.—Its first impulses may be illustrated by its subsequent actions.—Parents have another association of the man of genius than we.—Of genius, its first habits.—Its melancholy.—Its reveries.—Its love of solitude.—Its disposition to repose.—Of a youth distinguished by his equals.—Feebleness of its first attempts.—Of genius not discoverable even in manhood.—The education of the youth may not be that of his genius.—An unsettled impulse, querulous till it finds its true occupation.—With some, curiosity as intense a faculty as invention.—What the youth first applies to is commonly his delight afterwards.—Facts of the decisive character of genius.

WE are entering into a fairy land, touching only shadows, and chasing the most changeable lights; many stories we shall hear, and many scenes will open on

us; yet though realities are but dimly to be traced in this twilight of imagination and tradition, we think that the first impulses of genius may be often illustrated by the subsequent actions of the individual; and whenever we find these in perfect harmony, it will be difficult to convince us that there does not exist a secret connexion between those first impulses and these last actions.

Can we then trace in the faint lines of his youth an unsteady outline of the man? In the temperament of genius may we not reasonably look for certain indications or predispositions, announcing the permanent character? Is not great sensibility born with its irritable fibres? Will not the deep retired character cling to its musings? And the unalterable being of intrepidity and fortitude, will he not, commanding even amidst his sports, lead on his equals? The boyhood of Cato was marked by the sternness of the man, observable in his speech, his countenance, and his puerile amusements; and Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Gray, and others, betrayed the same early appearance of their intellectual vigour and precocity of character.

The virtuous and contemplative Boyle imagined that he had discovered in childhood that disposition of mind which indicated an instinctive ingenuousness. An incident which he relates, evinced, as he thought, that even then he preferred to aggravate his fault rather than consent to suppress any part of the truth, an effort which had been unnatural to his mind. His fanciful, yet striking illustration may open our inquiry. "This trivial passage," the little story alluded to, "I have mentioned now, not that I think that in itself it deserves a relation, but because as the sun is seen best at his rising and his setting, so men's native dispositions are clearliest perceived whilst they are children, and when they are dying. These little sudden actions are the greatest discoverers of men's true humours."

Alfieri, that historian of the literary mind, was conscious that even in his childhood the peculiarity and the melancholy of his character prevailed: a boyhood passed in domestic solitude fed the interior feelings of his impassioned character; and in noticing some incidents of a childish nature, this man of genius observes, "Whoever will reflect on these inept circumstances, and explore into the seeds of the passions of man, possibly may find these neither so laughable nor so puerile as they may appear." His native genius, or by whatever other term we may describe it, betrayed the wayward predispositions of some of his poetical brothers: "Taciturn and placid for the most part, but at times loquacious and most vivacious, and usually in the most opposite extremes; stubborn and impatient against force, but most open to kindness, more restrained by the dread of reprimand than by anything else, susceptible of shame to excess, but inflexible if violently opposed." Such is the portrait of a child of seven years old, a portrait which induced the great tragic bard to deduce this result from his own self-experience, that "*man* is a continuation of the *child*." *

That the dispositions of genius in early life presage its future character, was long the feeling of antiquity. Cicero, in his "Dialogue on Old Age," employs a beautiful analogy drawn from Nature, marking her secret conformity in all things which have life and come from her hands; and the human mind is one of her plants. "Youth is the vernal season of life, and the blossoms it then puts forth are indications of those future fruits which are to be gathered in the succeeding periods." One of the masters of the human mind, after much previous observation of those who attended his lectures,

* See in his Life, chap. iv., entitled *Sviluppo dell' indole indicato da vari fattarelli.* "Development of genius, or natural inclination, indicated by various little matters."

would advise one to engage in political studies, then exhorted another to compose history, elected these to be poets, and those to be orators; for Isocrates believed that Nature had some concern in forming a man of genius, and endeavoured to guess at her secret by detecting the first energetic inclination of the mind. This also was the principle which guided the Jesuits, those other great masters in the art of education. They studied the characteristics of their pupils with such singular care, as to keep a secret register in their colleges, descriptive of their talents, and the natural turn of their dispositions. In some cases they guessed with remarkable felicity. They described Fontenelle, *adolescens omnibus numeris absolutus et inter discipulos princeps*, "a youth accomplished in every respect and the model for his companions;" but when they describe the elder Crêbillon, *puer ingeniosus sed insignis nebulo*, "a shrewd boy, but a great rascal," they might not have erred so much as they appear to have done; for an impetuous boyhood showed the decision of a character which might not have merely and misanthropically settled in imaginary scenes of horror, and the invention of characters of unparalleled atrocity.

In the old romance of King Arthur, when a cowherd comes to the king to request he would make his son a knight—"It is a great thing thou askest," said Arthur, who inquired whether this entreaty proceeded from him or his son. The old man's answer is remarkable—"Of my son, not of me; for I have thirteen sons, and all these will fall to that labour I put them; but this child will not labour for me for anything that I and my wife will do; but always he will be shooting and casting darts, and glad for to see battles, and to behold knights, and always day and night he desireth of me to be made a knight." The king commanded the cowherd to fetch all his sons; "they were all shapen much like the poor man; but Tor was not like none of them in shape and in

countenance, for he was much more than any of them. And so Arthur knighted him." This simple tale is the history of genius—the cowherd's twelve sons were like himself, but the unhappy genius in the family, who perplexed and plagued the cowherd and his wife and his twelve brothers, was the youth averse to the common labour, and dreaming of chivalry amidst a herd of cows.

A man of genius is thus dropped among the people, and has first to encounter the difficulties of ordinary men, unassisted by that feeble ductility which adapts itself to the common destination. Parents are too often the victims of the decided propensity of a son to a Virgil or a Euclid; and the first step into life of a man of genius is disobedience and grief. Lilly, our famous astrologer, has described the frequent situation of such a youth, like the cowherd's son who would be a knight. Lilly proposed to his father that he should try his fortune in the metropolis, where he expected that his learning and his talents would prove serviceable to him; the father quite incapable of discovering the latent genius of his son in his studious disposition, very willingly consented to get rid of him, for, as Lilly proceeds, "I could not work, drive the plough, or endure any country labour; my father oft would say I was *good for nothing*,"—words which the fathers of so many men of genius have repeated.*

In reading the memoirs of a man of genius, we often reprobate the domestic persecutions of those who op-

* The father of Sir Joshua Reynolds reproached him frequently in his boyish days for his constant attention to drawing, and wrote on the back of one of his sketches the condemnatory words, "Done by Joshua out of pure idleness." Mignard distressed his father, the surgeon, by sketching the expressive faces of his patients instead of attending to their diseases; and our own Opie, when a boy, and working with his father at his business as a carpenter, used frequently to excite his anger by drawing with red chalk on the deal boards he had carefully planed for his trade.—Ed.

posed his inclinations. No poet but is moved with indignation at the recollection of the tutor at the Port Royal thrice burning the romance which Racine at length got by heart; no geometrician but bitterly inveighs against the father of Pascal for not suffering him to study Euclid, which he at length understood without studying. The father of Petrarch cast to the flames the poetical library of his son, amidst the shrieks, the groans, and the tears of the youth. Yet this burnt-offering neither converted Petrarch into a sober lawyer, nor deprived him of the Roman laurel. The uncle of Alfieri for more than twenty years suppressed the poetical character of this noble bard; he was a poet without knowing how to write a verse, and Nature, like a hard creditor, exacted, with redoubled interest, all the genius which the uncle had so long kept from her. These are the men whose inherent impulse no human opposition, and even no adverse education, can deter from proving them to be great men.

Let us, however, be just to the parents of a man of genius; they have another association of ideas respecting him than ourselves. We see a great man, they a disobedient child; we track him through his glory, they are wearied by the sullen resistance of one who is obscure and seems useless. The career of genius is rarely that of fortune or happiness; and the father, who himself may not be insensible to glory, dreads lest his son be found among that obscure multitude, that populace of mean artists, self-deluded, yet self-dissatisfied, who must expire at the barriers of mediocrity.

If the youth of genius be struggling with a concealed impulse, he will often be thrown into a train of secret instruction which no master can impart. Hippocrates profoundly observed, that "our *natures* have not been taught us by any master." The faculty which the youth of genius displays in after-life may exist long ere it is

perceived; and it will only make its own what is homogeneous with itself. We may often observe how the mind of this youth stubbornly rejects whatever is contrary to its habits, and alien to its affections. Of a solitary character, for solitariness is the wild nurse of his contemplations, he is fancifully described by one of the race—and here fancies are facts:

> He is retired as noon-tide dew,
> Or fountain in a noon-day grove.

The romantic Sidney exclaimed, "Eagles fly alone, and they are but sheep which always herd together."

As yet this being, in the first rudiments of his sensations, is touched by rapid emotions, and disturbed by a vague restlessness; for him the images of nature are yet dim, and he feels before he thinks; for imagination precedes reflection. One truly inspired unfolds the secret story—

> Endow'd with all that Nature can bestow,
> The child of fancy oft in silence bends
> O'er the mixt treasures of his pregnant breast
> With conscious pride. From thence he oft resolves
> To frame he knows not what excelling things;
> And win he knows not what sublime reward
> Of praise and wonder!

But the solitude of the youth of genius has a local influence; it is full of his own creations, of his unmarked passions, and his uncertain thoughts. The titles which he gives his favourite haunts often intimate the bent of his mind—its employment, or its purpose; as Petrarch called his retreat *Linternum*, after that of his hero Scipio; and a young poet, from some favourite description in Cowley, called a spot he loved to muse in, "Cowley's Walk."

A temperament of this kind has been often mistaken

for melancholy.* "When the intermission of my studies allowed me leisure for recreation," says Boyle of his early life, "I would very often steal away from all company, and spend four or five hours alone in the fields, and think at random; making my delighted imagination the busy scene where some romance or other was daily acted." This circumstance alarmed his friends, who concluded that he was overcome with a growing melancholy. Alfieri found himself in this precise situation, and experienced these undefinable emotions, when, in his first travels at Marseilles, his lonely spirit only haunted the theatre and the seashore: the tragic drama was then casting its influences over his unconscious genius. Almost every evening, after bathing in the sea, it delighted him to retreat to a little recess where the land jutted out; there would he sit, leaning his back against a high rock, which he tells us, "concealed from my sight every part of the land behind me, while before and around me I beheld nothing but the sea and the heavens: the sun, sinking into the waves, was lighting up and embellishing these two immensities; there would I pass a delicious hour of fantastic ruminations, and there I should have composed many a poem, had I then known how to write either in verse or prose in any language whatever."

An incident of this nature is revealed to us by the other noble and mighty spirit of our times, who could most truly exhibit the history of the youth of genius, and he has painted forth the enthusiasm of the boy Tasso:—

* This solemnity of manner was aped in the days of Elizabeth and James I. by such as affected scholar-like habits, and is frequently alluded to by the satirists of the time. Ben Jonson, in his "Every Man in his Humour," delineates the "country gull," Master Stephen, as affecting "to be mightily given to melancholy," and receiving the assurance, "It's your only fine humour, sir; your true melancholy breeds your perfect fine wit, sir."—Ed.

> From my very birth
> My soul was drunk with love, which did pervade
> And mingle with whate'er I saw on earth;
> Of objects all inanimate I made
> Idols, and out of wild and lonely flowers
> And rocks whereby they grew, a paradise,
> Where I did lay me down within the shade
> Of waving trees, and dream'd uncounted hours,
> Though I was chid for wandering.

The youth of genius will be apt to retire from the active sports of his mates. Beattie paints himself in his own Minstrel:

> Concourse, and noise, and toil he ever fled,
> Nor cared to mingle in the clamorous fray
> Of squabbling imps; but to the forest sped.

Bossuet would not join his young companions, and flew to his solitary task, while the classical boys avenged themselves by a schoolboy's villanous pun: stigmatising the studious application of Bossuet by the *bos suetus aratro* which frequent flogging had made them classical enough to quote.

The learned Huet has given an amusing detail of the inventive persecutions of his schoolmates, to divert him from his obstinate love of study. "At length, in order to indulge my own taste, I would rise with the sun, while they were buried in sleep, and hide myself in the woods, that I might read and study in quiet;" but they beat the bushes, and started in his burrow the future man of erudition. Sir William Jones was rarely a partaker in the active sports of Harrow; it was said of Gray that he was never a boy; the unhappy Chatterton and Burns were singularly serious in youth;* as were Hobbes and Bacon.

* Dr. Gregory says of Chatterton, "Instead of the thoughtless levity of childhood, he possessed the pensiveness, gravity, and melancholy of maturer life. He was frequently so lost in contemplation, that for many days together he would say but very little, and that apparently by constraint. His intimates in the school were few, and those of the most

Milton has preserved for us, in solemn numbers, his school-life—

> When I was yet a child, no childish play
> To me was pleasing: all my mind was set
> Serious to learn and know, and thence to do
> What might be public good: myself I thought
> Born to that end, born to promote all truth,
> All righteous things.

It is remarkable that this love of repose and musing is retained throughout life. A man of fine genius is rarely enamoured of common amusements or of robust exercises; and he is usually unadroit where dexterity of hand or eye, or trivial elegances, are required. This characteristic of genius was discovered by Horace in that Ode which schoolboys often versify. Beattie has expressly told us of his Minstrel,

> The exploit of strength, dexterity or speed
> To him nor vanity nor joy could bring.

Alfieri said he could never be taught by a French dancing-master, whose art made him at once shudder and laugh. Horace, by his own confession, was a very awkward rider, and the poet could not always secure a seat on his mule: Metastasio humorously complains of his gun; the poetical sportsman could only frighten the hares and partridges; the truth was, as an elder poet sings,

> Instead of hounds that make the wooded hills
> Talk in a hundred voices to the rills,
> I like the pleasing cadence of a line,
> Struck by the concert of the sacred Nine.

And we discover the true "humour" of the indolent contemplative race in their great representatives Virgil and Horace. When they accompanied Mecænas into the

serious cast." Of Burns, his schoolmaster, Mr. Murdoch, says—"Robert's countenance was generally grave, and expressive of a serious, contemplative, and thoughtful mind."—Ed.

country, while the minister amused himself at tennis, the two bards reposed on a vernal bank amidst the freshness of the shade. The younger Pliny, who was so perfect a literary character, was charmed by the Roman mode of hunting, or rather fowling by nets, which admitted him to sit a whole day with his tablets and stylus; so, says he, "should I return with empty nets, my tablets may at least be full." Thomson was the hero of his own "Castle of Indolence;" and the elegant Waller infuses into his luxurious verses the true feeling:

> Oh, how I long my careless limbs to lay
> Under the plantane shade, and all the day
> Invoke the Muses and improve my vein.

The youth of genius, whom Beattie has drawn after himself, and I after observation, a poet of great genius, as I understand, has declared to be "too effeminate and timid, and too much troubled with delicate nerves. The *greatest poets* of all countries," he continues, "have been men eminently endowed with *bodily powers*, and rejoiced and excelled in all *manly exercises*." May not our critic of northern habits have often mistaken the art of the great poets in *describing* such "manly exercises or bodily powers," for the proof of their "rejoicing and excelling in them?" Poets and artists, from their habits, are not usually muscular and robust.* Continuity of thought, absorbing reverie, and sedentary habits, will not combine with corporeal skill and activity. There is also a constitutional delicacy which is too often the accompaniment of a fine intellect. The inconveniences

* "Dr. Currie, in his "Life of Burns," has a passage which may be quoted here: "Though by nature of an athletic form, Burns had in his constitution the peculiarities and the delicacies that belong to the temperament of genius. He was liable, from a very early period of life, to that interruption in the process of digestion which arises from deep and anxious thought, and which is sometimes the effect, and sometimes the cause, of depression of spirits."—Ed.

attached to the inferior sedentary labourers are participated in by men of genius; the analogy is obvious, and their fate is common. Literary men may be included in Ramazzini's "Treatise on the Diseases of Artizans." Rousseau has described the labours of the closet as enervating men, and weakening the constitution, while study wears the whole machinery of man, exhausts the spirits, destroys his strength, and renders him pusillanimous.* But there is a higher principle which guides us to declare, that men of genius should not *excel* in "all manly exercises." Seneca, whose habits were completely literary, admonishes the man of letters that "Whatever amusement he chooses, he should not slowly return from those of the body to the mind, while he should be exercising the latter night and day." Seneca was aware that "to rejoice and excel in all manly exercises," would in some cases intrude into the habits of a literary man, and sometimes be even ridiculous. Mortimer, once a celebrated artist, was tempted by his athletic frame to indulge in frequent violent exercises; and it is not without reason suspected, that habits so unfavourable to thought and study precluded that promising genius from attaining to the maturity of his talents, however he might have succeeded in invigorating his physical powers.

But to our solitude. So true is it that this love of loneliness is an early passion, that two men of genius of very opposite characters, the one a French wit and the other a French philosopher, have acknowledged that they have felt its influence, and even imagined that they had discovered its cause. The Abbé de St. Pierre, in his political annals, tells us, "I remember to have heard old Segrais remark, that most young people of both sexes had at one time of their lives, generally about seventeen or eighteen years of age, an inclination to

* In the Preface to the "Narcisse."

retire from the world. He maintained this to be a species of melancholy, and humourously called it the small-pox of the mind, because scarce one in a thousand escaped the attack. I myself have had this distemper, but am not much marked with it."

But if the youth of genius be apt to retire from the ordinary sports of his mates, he will often substitute for them others, which are the reflections of those favourite studies which are haunting his young imagination, as men in their dreams repeat the conceptions which have habitually interested them. The amusements of such an idler have often been analogous to his later pursuits. Ariosto, while yet a schoolboy, seems to have been very susceptible of poetry, for he composed a sort of tragedy from the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, to be represented by his brothers and sisters, and at this time also delighted himself in translating the old French and Spanish romances. Sir William Jones, at Harrow, divided the fields according to a map of Greece, and to each schoolfellow portioned out a dominion; and when wanting a copy of the *Tempest* to act from, he supplied it from his memory; we must confess that the boy Jones was reflecting in his amusements the cast of mind he displayed in his after-life, and evincing that felicity of memory and taste so prevalent in his literary character. Florian's earliest years were passed in shooting birds all day, and reading every evening an old translation of the Iliad: whenever he got a bird remarkable for its size or its plumage, he personified it by one of the names of his heroes, and raising a funeral pyre, consumed the body: collecting the ashes in an urn, he presented them to his grandfather, with a narrative of his Patroclus or Sarpedon. We seem here to detect, reflected in his boyish sports, the pleasing genius of the author of Numa Pompilius, Gonsalvo of Cordova, and William Tell. Bacon, when a child, was so remarkable for thoughtful observa-

tion, that Queen Elizabeth used to call him "the young lord-keeper." The boy made a remarkable reply, when her Majesty, inquiring of him his age, he said, that "He was two years younger than her Majesty's happy reign." The boy may have been tutored; but this mixture of gravity, and ingenuity, and political courtiership, undoubtedly caught from his father's habits, afterwards characterised Lord Bacon's manhood. I once read the letter of a contemporary of Hobbes, where I found that this great philosopher, when a lad, used to ride on packs of skins to market, to sell them for his father, who was a fellmonger; and that in the market-place he thus early began to vent his private opinions, which long afterwards so fully appeared in his writings.

For a youth to be distinguished by his equals is perhaps a criterion of talent. At that moment of life, with no flattery on the one side, and no artifice on the other, all emotion and no reflection, the boy who has obtained a predominance has acquired this merely by native powers. The boyhood of Nelson was characterised by events congenial with those of his after-days; and his father understood his character when he declared that, "in whatever station he might be placed, he would climb, if possible, to the top of the tree." Some puerile anecdotes which Franklin remembered of himself, betray the invention and the firm intrepidity of his character, and even perhaps his carelessness of means to obtain a purpose. In boyhood he felt a desire for adventure; but as his father would not consent to a sea life, he made the river near him represent the ocean; he lived on the water, and was the daring Columbus of a schoolboy's boat. A part where he and his mates stood to angle, in time became a quagmire: in the course of one day, the infant projector thought of a wharf for them to stand on, and raised it with a heap of stones deposited there for the building of a house. With that sort of practical wis-

dom, or Ulyssean cunning, which marked his mature character, Franklin raised his wharf at the expense of another's house. His contrivances to aid his puny labourers, with his resolution not to quit the great work till it was effected, seem to strike out to us the invention and decision of his future character. But the qualities which would attract the companions of a schoolboy may not be those which are essential to fine genius. The captain or leader of his schoolmates is not to be disregarded; but it is the sequestered boy who may chance to be the artist or the literary character. Some facts which have been recorded of men of genius at this period are remarkable. We are told by Miss Stewart that Johnson, when a boy at the free-school, appeared "a huge overgrown misshapen stripling;" but was considered as a stupendous stripling; "for even at that early period of life, Johnson maintained his opinions with the same sturdy, dogmatical, and arrogant fierceness." The puerile characters of Lord Bolingbroke and Sir Robert Walpole, schoolfellows and rivals, were observed to prevail through their after-life; the liveliness and brilliancy of Bolingbroke appeared in his attacks on Walpole, whose solid and industrious qualities triumphed by resistance. A parallel instance might be pointed out in two great statesmen of our own days; in the wisdom of the one and the wit of the other —men whom nature made rivals, and time made friends or enemies, as it happened. A curious observer, in looking over a collection of the Cambridge poems, which were formerly composed by its students, has remarked that "Cowley from the first was quaint, Milton sublime, and Barrow copious." If then the characteristic disposition may reveal itself thus early, it affords a principle which ought not to be neglected at this obscure period of youth.

Is there then a period in youth which yields decisive

marks of the character of genius? The natures of men are as various as their fortunes. Some, like diamonds, must wait to receive their splendour from the slow touches of the polisher, while others, resembling pearls, appear at once born with their beauteous lustre.

Among the inauspicious circumstances is the feebleness of the first attempts; and we must not decide on the talents of a young man by his first works. Dryden and Swift might have been deterred from authorship had their earliest pieces decided their fate. Smollett, before he knew which way his genius would conduct him, had early conceived a high notion of his talents for dramatic poetry: his tragedy of the *Regicide* was refused by Garrick, whom for a long time he could not forgive, but continued to abuse our Roscius, through his works of genius, for having discountenanced his first work, which had none. Racine's earliest composition, as we may judge by some fragments his son has preserved, remarkably contrasts with his writings; for these fragments abound with those points and conceits which he afterwards abhorred. The tender author of "Andromache" could not have been discovered while exhausting himself in running after *concetti* as surprising as the worst parts of Cowley, in whose spirit alone he could have hit on this perplexing *concetto*, descriptive of Aurora: "Fille du Jour, qui nais devant ton père!"—"Daughter of Day, but born before thy father!" Gibbon betrayed none of the force and magnitude of his powers in his "Essay on Literature," or his attempted "History of Switzerland." Johnson's cadenced prose is not recognisable in the humbler simplicity of his earliest years. Many authors have begun unsuccessfully the walk they afterwards excelled in. Raphael, when he first drew his meagre forms under Perugino, had not yet conceived one line of that ideal beauty which one day he of all men could alone execute.

Who could have imagined, in examining the *Dream* of Raphael, that the same pencil could hereafter have poured out the miraculous *Transfiguration?* Or that, in the imitative pupil of Hudson, our country was at length to pride herself on another Raphael?*

Even the manhood of genius may pass unobserved by his companions, and, like Æneas, he may be hidden in a cloud amidst his associates. The celebrated Fabius Maximus in his boyhood was called in derision "the little sheep," from the meekness and gravity of his disposition. His sedateness and taciturnity, his indifference to juvenile amusement, his slowness and difficulty in learning, and his ready submission to his equals, induced them to consider him as one irrecoverably stupid. The greatness of mind, unalterable courage, and invincible character, which Fabius afterwards displayed, they then imagined had lain concealed under the apparent contrary qualities. The boy of genius may indeed seem slow and dull even to the phlegmatic; for thoughtful and observing dispositions conceal themselves in timorous silent characters, who have not yet experienced their strength; and that assiduous love, which cannot tear itself away from the secret instruction it is perpetually imbibing, cannot be easily distinguished from the pertinacity of the mere plodder. We often hear, from the early companions of a man of genius, that at school he appeared heavy and unpromising. Rousseau imagined that the childhood of some men is accompanied by this seeming and deceitful dulness, which is the sign of a profound genius; and Roger Ascham has placed among "the best natures

* Hudson was the fashionable portrait-painter who succeeded Kneller, and made a great reputation and fortune; but he was a very mean artist, who merely copied the peculiarities of his predecessor without his genius. His stiff hard style was formality itself; but was approved in an age of formalism; the earlier half of the last century.—Ed.

for learning, the sad-natured and hard-witted child;" that is, the thoughtful, or the melancholic, and the slow. The young painters, to ridicule the persevering labours of Domenichino, which were at first heavy and unpromising, called him "the great ox;" and Passeri, while he has happily expressed the still labours of his concealed genius, *sua taciturna lentezza*, his silent slowness, expresses his surprise at the accounts he received of the early life of this great artist. "It is difficult to believe, what many assert, that from the beginning, this great painter had a ruggedness about him which entirely incapacitated him from learning his profession; and they have heard from himself that he quite despaired of success. Yet I cannot comprehend how such vivacious talents, with a mind so finely organised, and accompanied with such favourable dispositions for the art, would show such signs of utter incapacity; I rather think that it is a mistake in the proper knowledge of genius, which some imagine indicates itself most decisively by its sudden vehemence, showing itself like lightning, and like lightning passing away."

A parallel case we find in Goldsmith, who passed through an unpromising youth; he declared that he was never attached to literature till he was thirty; that poetry had no peculiar charms for him till that age;* and, indeed, to his latest hour he was surprising his friends by productions which they had imagined he was incapable of composing. Hume was considered, for his sobriety and assiduity, as competent to become a steady merchant; and it was said of Boileau that he had no great understanding, but would speak ill of no one. This circumstance of the character in youth being entirely mistaken, or entirely opposite to the subsequent one of maturer life, has been

* This is a remarkable expression from Goldsmith: but it is much more so when we hear it from Lord Byron. See a note in the following chapter, on "The First Studies," p. 81.

noticed of many. Even a discerning parent or master has entirely failed to develope the genius of the youth, who has afterwards ranked among eminent men; we ought as little to decide from early unfavourable appearances, as from inequality of talent. The great Isaac Barrow's father used to say, that if it pleased God to take from him any of his children, he hoped it might be Isaac, as the least promising; and during the three years Barrow passed at the Charter-house, he was remarkable only for the utter negligence of his studies and of his person. The mother of Sheridan, herself a literary female, pronounced early that he was the dullest and most hopeless of her sons. Bodmer, at the head of the literary class in Switzerland, who had so frequently discovered and animated the literary youths of his country, could never detect the latent genius of Gesner: after a repeated examination of the young man, he put his parents in despair with the hopeless award that a mind of so ordinary a cast must confine itself to mere writing and accompts. One fact, however, Bodmer had overlooked when he pronounced the fate of our poet and artist—the dull youth, who could not retain barren words, discovered an active fancy in the image of things. While at his grammar lessons, as it happened to Lucian, he was employing tedious hours in modelling in wax, groups of men, animals, and other figures, the rod of the pedagogue often interrupted the fingers of our infant moulder, who never ceased working to amuse his little sisters with his waxen creatures, which constituted all his happiness. Those arts of imitation were already possessing the soul of the boy Gesner, to which afterwards it became so entirely devoted.

Thus it happens that in the first years of life the education of the youth may not be the education of his genius; he lives unknown to himself and others. In all these cases nature had dropped the seeds in the soil; but even

a happy disposition must be concealed amidst adverse circumstances: I repeat, that genius can only make that its own which is homogeneous with its nature. It has happened to some men of genius during a long period of their lives, that an unsettled impulse, unable to discover the object of its aptitude, a thirst and fever in the temperament of too sentient a being, which cannot find the occupation to which only it can attach itself, has sunk into a melancholy and querulous spirit, weary with the burthen of existence; but the instant the latent talent had declared itself, his first work, the eager offspring of desire and love, has astonished the world at once with the birth and the maturity of genius.

We are told that Pelegrino Tibaldi, who afterwards obtained the glorious title of "the reformed Michael Angelo," long felt the strongest internal dissatisfaction at his own proficiency, and that one day, in melancholy and despair, he had retired from the city, resolved to starve himself to death; his friend discovered him, and having persuaded him to change his pursuits from painting to architecture, he soon rose to eminence. This story D'Argenville throws some doubt over; but as Tibaldi during twenty years abstained from his pencil, a singular circumstance seems explained by an extraordinary occurrence. Tasso, with feverish anxiety pondered on five different subjects before he could decide in the choice of his epic; the same embarrassment was long the fate of Gibbon on the subject of his history. Some have sunk into a deplorable state of utter languishment, from the circumstance of being deprived of the means of pursuing their beloved study, as in the case of the chemist Bergman. His friends, to gain him over to the more lucrative professions, deprived him of his books of natural history; a plan which nearly proved fatal to the youth, who with declining health quitted the university. At length, ceasing to struggle with the conflicting desire

within him, his renewed enthusiasm for his favourite science restored the health he had lost in abandoning it.

It was the view of the tomb of Virgil which so powerfully influenced the innate genius of Boccaccio, and fixed his instant decision. As yet young, and in the neighbourhood of Naples, wandering for recreation, he reached the tomb of the Mantuan. Pausing before it, his youthful mind began to meditate. Struck by the universal glory of that great name, he lamented his own fortune to be occupied by the obscure details of merchandise; already he sighed to emulate the fame of the Roman, and as Villani tells us, from that day he abandoned forever the occupations of commerce, dedicating himself to literature. Proctor, the lost Phidias of our country, would often say, that he should never have quitted his mercantile situation, but for the accidental sight of Barry's picture of "Venus rising from the Sea;" a picture which produced so immediate an effect on his mind, that it determined him to quit a lucrative occupation. Surely we cannot account for such sudden effusions of the mind, and such instant decisions, but by the principle of that predisposition which only waits for an occasion to declare itself.

Abundant facts exhibit genius unequivocally discovering itself in youth. In general, perhaps, a master-mind exhibits precocity. "Whatever a young man at first applies himself to, is commonly his delight afterwards." This remark was made by Hartley, who has related an anecdote of the infancy of his genius, which indicated the manhood. He declared to his daughter that the intention of writing a book upon the nature of man, was conceived in his mind when he was a very little boy—when swinging backwards and forwards upon a gate, not more than nine or ten years old; he was then meditating upon the nature of his own mind, how man was made, and for what future end. Such was the true origin, in a boy of ten years old, of his celebrated book on "The Frame, the

Duty, and the Expectation of Man." John Hunter conceived his notion of the principle of life, which to his last day formed the subject of his inquiries and experiments, when he was very young; for at that period of life, Mr. Abernethy tell us, he began his observations on the incubated egg, which suggested or corroborated his opinions.

A learned friend, and an observer of men of science, has supplied me with a remark highly deserving notice. It is an observation that will generally hold good, that the most important systems of theory, however late they may be published, have been formed at a very early period of life. This important observation may be verified by some striking facts. A most curious one will be found in Lord Bacon's letter to Father Fulgentio, where he gives an account of his projecting his philosophy thirty years before, during his youth. Milton from early youth mused on the composition of an epic. De Thou has himself told us, that from his tender youth his mind was full of the idea of composing a history of his own times; and his whole life was passed in preparation, and in a continued accession of materials for a future period. From the age of twenty, Montesquieu was preparing the materials of *L'Esprit des Loix*, by extracts from the immense volumes of civil law. Tillemont's vast labours were traced out in his mind at the early age of nineteen, on reading Baronius; and some of the finest passages in Racine's tragedies were composed while a pupil, wandering in the woods of the Port-Royal. So true is it that the seeds of many of our great literary and scientific works were lying, for many years antecedent to their being given to the world, in a latent state of germination.*

* I need not to be reminded, that I am not worth mentioning among the illustrious men who have long formed the familiar subjects of my delightful researches. But with the middling as well as with the great, the same habits must operate. Early in life, I was struck by

The predisposition of genius has declared itself in painters and poets, who were such before they understood the nature of colours and the arts of verse; and this vehement propensity, so mysteriously constitutional, may be traced in other intellectual characters besides those which belong to the class of imagination. It was said that Pitt was *born* a minister; the late Dr. Shaw I always considered as one *born* a naturalist, and I know a great literary antiquary who seems to me to have been also *born* such; for the passion of *curiosity* is as intense a faculty, or instinct, with some casts of mind, as is that of *invention* with poets and painters: I confess that to me it is *genius* in a form in which genius has not yet been suspected to appear. One of the biographers of Sir Hans Sloane expresses himself in this manner:—"Our author's *thirst* for knowledge seems to have been *born* with him, so that his *Cabinet of Rarities* may be said to have commenced with *his being*." This strange metaphorical style has only confused an obscure truth. Sloane, early in life, felt an irresistible impulse which inspired him with the most enlarged views of the productions of nature, and he exulted in their accomplishment; for in his will he has solemnly recorded, that his collections were the fruits of his early devotion, *having had from my youth a strong inclination to the study of plants and all other productions of nature.* The vehe-

the inductive philosophy of Bacon, and sought after a Moral Experimental Philosophy; and I had then in my mind an observation of Lord Bolingbroke's, for I see I quoted it thirty years ago, that "Abstract or general propositions, though never so true, appear obscure or doubtful to us very often till they are explained by examples." So far back as in 1793 I published "A Dissertation on Anecdotes," with the simplicity of a young votary; there I deduced results, and threw out a magnificent project not very practicable. From that time to the hour I am now writing, my metal has been running in this mould, and I still keep casting philosophy into anecdotes, and anecdotes into philosophy. As I began I fear I shall end.

ment passion of Peiresc for knowledge, according to accounts which Gassendi received from old men who had known him as a child, broke out as soon as he had been taught his alphabet; for then his delight was to be handling books and papers, and his perpetual inquiries after their contents obliged them to invent something to quiet the child's insatiable curiosity, who was hurt when told that he had not the capacity to understand them. He did not study as an ordinary scholar, for he never read but with perpetual researches. At ten years of age, his passion for the studies of antiquity was kindled at the sight of some ancient coins dug up in his neighbourhood; then that vehement passion for knowledge "began to burn like fire in a forest," as Gassendi happily describes the fervour and amplitude of the mind of this man of vast learning. Bayle, who was an experienced judge in the history of genius, observes on two friars, one of whom was haunted by a strong disposition to *genealogical*, and the other to *geographical* pursuits, that, "let a man do what he will, if nature incline us to certain things, there is no preventing the gratification of our desire, though it lies hid under a monk's frock." It is not, therefore, as the world is apt to imagine, only poets and painters for whom is reserved this restless and impetuous propensity for their particular pursuits; I claim it for the man of science as well as for the man of imagination. And I confess that I consider this strong bent of the mind in men eminent in pursuits in which imagination is little concerned, and whom men of genius have chosen to remove so far from their class, as another gifted aptitude. They, too, share in the glorious fever of genius, and we feel how just was the expression formerly used, of "their *thirst* for knowledge."

But to return to the men of genius who answer more strictly to the popular notion of inventors. We have Boccaccio's own words for a proof of his early natural

tendency to tale-writing, in a passage of his genealogy of the gods:—"Before seven years of age, when as yet I had met with no stories, was without a master, and hardly knew my letters, I had a natural talent for fiction, and produced some little tales." Thus the "Decamerone" was appearing much earlier than we suppose. Descartes, while yet a boy, indulged such habits of deep meditation, that he was nicknamed by his companions "The Philosopher," always questioning, and ever settling the cause and the effect. He was twenty-five years of age before he left the army, but the propensity for meditation had been early formed; and he has himself given an account of the pursuits which occupied his youth, and of the progress of his genius; of the secret struggle which he so long maintained with his own mind, wandering in concealment over the world for more than twenty years, and, as he says of himself, like the statuary labouring to draw out a Minerva from the marble block. Michael Angelo, as yet a child, wherever he went, busied himself in drawing; and when his noble parents, hurt that a man of genius was disturbing the line of their ancestry, forced him to relinquish the pencil, the infant artist flew to the chisel: the art which was in his soul would not allow of idle hands. Lope de Vega, Velasquez, Ariosto, and Tasso, are all said to have betrayed at their school-tasks the most marked indications of their subsequent characteristics.

This decision of the impulse of genius is apparent in Murillo. This young artist was undistinguished at the place of his birth. A brother artist returning home from London, where he had studied under Van Dyk, surprised Murillo by a chaste, and to him hitherto unknown, manner. Instantly he conceived the project of quitting his native Seville and flying to Italy—the fever of genius broke forth with all its restlessness. But he was destitute of the most ordinary means to pursue a journey, and

forced to an expedient, he purchased a piece of canvas, which dividing into parts, he painted on each figures of saints, landscapes, and flowers—an humble merchandise of art adapted to the taste and devout feelings of the times, and which were readily sold to the adventurers to the Indies. With these small means he departed, having communicated his project to no one except to a beloved sister, whose tears could not prevail to keep the lad at home; the impetuous impulse had blinded him to the perils and the impracticability of his wild project. He reached Madrid, where the great Velasquez, his countryman, was struck by the ingenuous simplicity of the youth, who urgently requested letters for Rome; but when that noble genius understood the purport of this romantic journey, Velasquez assured him that he need not proceed to Italy to learn the art he loved. The great master opened the royal galleries to the youth, and cherished his studies. Murillo returned to his native city, where, from his obscurity, he had never been missed, having ever lived a retired life of silent labour; but this painter of nature returned to make the city which had not noticed his absence the theatre of his glory.

The same imperious impulse drove Callot, at the age of twelve years, from his father's roof. His parents, from prejudices of birth, had conceived that the art of engraving was one beneath the studies of their son; but the boy had listened to stories of the miracles of Italian art, and with a curiosity predominant over any self-consideration, one morning the genius flew away. Many days had not elapsed, when finding himself in the utmost distress, with a gang of gipsies he arrived at Florence. A merchant of Nancy discovered him, and returned the reluctant boy of genius to his home. Again he flies to Italy, and again his brother discovers him, and reconducts him to his parents. The father, whose patience and forgiveness were now exhausted, permitted his son to become the most

original genius of French art—one who, in his vivacious groups, the touch of his graver, and the natural expression of his figures, anticipated the creations of Hogarth.

Facts of this decisive character are abundant. See the boy Nanteuil hiding himself in a tree to pursue the delightful exercise of his pencil, while his parents are averse to their son practising his young art! See Handel, intended for a doctor of the civil laws, and whom no parental discouragement could deprive of his enthusiasm, for ever touching harpsichords, and having secretly conveyed a musical instrument to a retired apartment, listen to him when, sitting through the night, he awakens his harmonious spirit! Observe Ferguson, the child of a peasant, acquiring the art of reading without any one suspecting it, by listening to his father teaching his brother; observe him making a wooden watch without the slightest knowledge of mechanism; and while a shepherd, studying, like an ancient Chaldean, the phenomena of the heavens, on a celestial globe formed by his own hand. That great mechanic, Smeaton, when a child, disdained the ordinary playthings of his age; he collected the tools of workmen, observed them at their work, and asked questions till he could work himself. One day, having watched some millwrights, the child was shortly after, to the distress of the family, discovered in a situation of extreme danger, fixing up at the top of a barn a rude windmill. Many circumstances of this nature occurred before his sixth year. His father, an attorney, sent him up to London to be brought up to the same profession; but he declared that "the study of the law did not suit the *bent of his genius*"—a term he frequently used. He addressed a strong memorial to his father, to show his utter incompetency to study law; and the good sense of the father abandoned Smeaton "to the bent of his genius in his own way." Such is the history of the man who raised the

Eddystone Lighthouse, in the midst of the waves, like the rock on which it stands.

Can we hesitate to believe that in such minds there was a resistless and mysterious propensity, "growing with the growth" of these youths, who seem to have been placed out of the influence of that casual excitement, or any other of those sources of genius, so frequently assigned for its production?

Yet these cases are not more striking than the one related of the Abbé La Caille, who ranked among the first astronomers of the age. La Caille was the son of the parish clerk of a village. At the age of ten years his father sent him every evening to ring the church bell, but the boy always returned home late: his father was angry, and beat him, and still the boy returned an hour after he had rung the bell. The father suspecting something mysterious in his conduct, one evening watched him. He saw his son ascend the steeple, ring the bell as usual, and remain there during an hour. When the unlucky boy descended, he trembled like one caught in the fact, and on his knees confessed that the pleasure he took in watching the stars from the steeple was the real cause which detained him from home. As the father was not born to be an astronomer, he flogged his son severely. The youth was found weeping in the streets by a man of science, who, when he discovered in a boy of ten years of age a passion for contemplating the stars at night, and one, too, who had discovered an observatory in a steeple, decided that the seal of Nature had impressed itself on the genius of that boy. Relieving the parent from the son, and the son from the parent, he assisted the young La Caille in his passionate pursuit, and the event completely justified the prediction. How children feel a predisposition for the studies of astronomy, or mechanics, or architecture, or natural history, is that secret in nature we have not guessed.

There may be a virgin thought as well as a virgin habit —nature before education—which first opens the mind, and ever afterwards is shaping its tender folds. Accidents may occur to call it forth, but thousands of youths have found themselves in parallel situations with Smeaton, Ferguson, and La Caille, without experiencing their energies.

The case of Clairon, the great French tragic actress, who seems to have been an actress before she saw a theatre, deserves attention. This female, destined to be a sublime tragedian, was of the lowest extraction; the daughter of a violent and illiterate woman, who, with blows and menaces, was driving about the child all day to manual labour. "I know not," says Clairon, "whence I derive my disgust, but I could not bear the idea to be a mere workwoman, or to remain inactive in a corner." In her eleventh year, being locked up in a room as a punishment, with the windows fastened, she climbed upon a chair to look about her. A new object instantly absorbed her attention. In the house opposite she observed a celebrated actress amidst her family; her daughter was performing her dancing lesson: the girl Clairon, the future Melpomene, was struck by the influence of this graceful and affectionate scene. "All my little being collected itself into my eyes; I lost not a single motion; as soon as the lesson ended, all the family applauded, and the mother embraced the daughter. The difference of her fate and mine filled me with profound grief; my tears hindered me from seeing any longer, and when the palpitations of my heart allowed me to re-ascend the chair, all had disappeared." This scene was a discovery; from that moment Clairon knew no rest, and rejoiced when she could get her mother to confine her in that room. The happy girl was a divinity to the unhappy one, whose susceptible genius imitated her in every gesture and every motion; and Clairon

soon showed the effect of her ardent studies. She betrayed in the common intercourse of life, all the graces she had taught herself; she charmed her friends, and even softened her barbarous mother; in a word, the enthusiastic girl was an actress without knowing what an actress was.

In this case of the youth of genius, are we to conclude that the accidental view of a young actress practising her studies imparted the character of Clairon? Could a mere chance occurrence have given birth to those faculties which produced a sublime tragedian? In all arts there are talents which may be acquired by imitation and reflection,—and thus far may genius be educated; but there are others which are entirely the result of native sensibility, which often secretly torment the possessor, and which may even be lost from the want of development, dissolved into a state of languor from which many have not recovered. Clairon, before she saw the young actress, and having yet no conception of a theatre—for she had never entered one—had in her soul that latent faculty which creates a dramatic genius. "Had I not felt like Dido," she once exclaimed, "I could not have thus personified her!"

The force of impressions received in the warm susceptibility of the childhood of genius, is probably little known to us; but we may perceive them also working in the *moral character*, which frequently discovers itself in childhood, and which manhood cannot always conceal, however it may alter. The intellectual and the moral character are unquestionably closely allied. Erasmus acquaints us, that Sir Thomas More had something ludicrous in his aspect, tending to a smile,—a feature which his portraits preserve; and that he was more inclined to pleasantry and jesting, than to the gravity of the chancellor. This circumstance he imputes to Sir Thomas More "being from a child so delighted with humour,

that he seemed to be even born for it." And we know that he died as he had lived, with a jest on his lips. The hero, who came at length to regret that he had but one world to conquer, betrayed the majesty of his restless genius when but a youth. Had Aristotle been nigh when, solicited to join in the course, the princely boy replied, that "He would run in no career where kings were not the competitors," the prescient tutor might have recognized in his pupil the future and successful rival of Darius and Porus.

A narrative of the earliest years of Prince Henry, by one of his attendants, forms an authentic collection of juvenile anecdotes, which made me feel very forcibly that there are some children who deserve to have a biographer at their side; but anecdotes of children are the rarest of biographies, and I deemed it a singular piece of good fortune to have recovered such a remarkable evidence of the precocity of character.* Professor Dugald Stewart has noticed a fact in Arnauld's infancy, which, considered in connexion with his subsequent life, affords a good illustration of the force of impressions received in the first dawn of reason. Arnauld, who, to his eightieth year, passed through a life of theological controversy, when a child, amusing himself in the library of the Cardinal Du Perron, requested to have a pen given to him. "For what purpose?" inquired the cardinal. "To write books, like you, against the Huguenots." The cardinal, then aged and infirm, could not conceal his joy at the prospect of so hopeful a successor; and placing the pen in his hand, said, "I give it you as the dying shepherd, Damœtas, bequeathed his pipe to the little Corydon." Other children might have asked for a pen—but to write against the Huguenots evinced a deeper feeling and a wider association of ideas, indicating the future polemic.

* I have preserved this manuscript narrative in "Curiosities of Literature," vol. ii.

Some of these facts, we conceive, afford decisive evidence of that instinct in genius, that primary quality of mind, sometimes called organization, which has inflamed a war of words by an equivocal term. We repeat that this faculty of genius can exist independent of education, and where it is wanting, education can never confer it: it is an impulse, an instinct always working in the character of "the chosen mind;"

> One with our feelings and our powers,
> And rather part of us, than ours.

In the history of genius there are unquestionably many secondary causes of considerable influence in developing, or even crushing the germ—these have been of late often detected, and sometimes carried to a ridiculous extreme; but among them none seem more remarkable than the first studies and the first habits.

CHAPTER VI.

The first studies.—The self-educated are marked by stubborn peculiarities.—Their errors.—Their improvement from the neglect or contempt they incur.—The history of self-education in Moses Mendelssohn.—Friends usually prejudicial in the youth of genius.—A remarkable interview between Petrarch in his first studies, and his literary adviser.—Exhortation.

THE first studies form an epoch in the history of genius, and unquestionably have sensibly influenced its productions. Often have the first impressions stamped a character on the mind adapted to receive one, as the first step into life has often determined its walk. But this, for ourselves, is a far distant period in our existence,

which is lost in the horizon of our own recollections, and is usually unobserved by others.

Many of those peculiarities of men of genius which are not fortunate, and some which have hardened the character in its mould, may, however, be traced to this period. Physicians tell us that there is a certain point in youth at which the constitution is formed, and on which the sanity of life revolves; the character of genius experiences a similar dangerous period. Early bad tastes, early peculiar habits, early defective instructions, all the egotistical pride of an untamed intellect, are those evil spirits which will dog genius to its grave. An early attachment to the works of Sir Thomas Browne produced in Johnson an excessive admiration of that Latinised English, which violated the native graces of the language; and the peculiar style of Gibbon is traced by himself "to the constant habit of speaking one language, and writing another. The first studies of Rembrandt affected his after-labours. The peculiarity of shadow which marks all his pictures, originated in the circumstance of his father's mill receiving light from an aperture at the top, which habituated the artist afterwards to view all objects as if seen in that magical light. The intellectual Poussin, as Nicholas has been called, could never, from an early devotion to the fine statues of antiquity, extricate his genius on the canvas from the hard forms of marble; he sculptured with his pencil; and that cold austerity of tone, still more remarkable in his last pictures, as it became mannered, chills the spectator on a first glance. When Pope was a child, he found in his mother's closet a small library of mystical devotion; but it was not suspected, till the fact was discovered, that the effusions of love and religion poured forth in his "Eloisa" were caught from the seraphic raptures of those erotic mystics, who to the last retained a place in his library among the classical bards of antiquity. The accidental perusal of

Quintus Curtius first made Boyle, to use his own words, "in love with other than pedantic books, and conjured up in him an unsatisfied appetite of knowledge; so that he thought he owed more to Quintus Curtius than did Alexander." From the perusal of Rycaut's folio of Turkish history in childhood, the noble and impassioned bard of our times retained those indelible impressions which gave life and motion to the "Giaour," "the Corsair," and "Alp." A voyage to the country produced the scenery. Rycaut only communicated the impulse to a mind susceptible of the poetical character; and without this Turkish history we should still have had the poet.*

The influence of first studies in the formation of the character of genius is a moral phenomenon which has not sufficiently attracted our notice. Franklin acquaints us that, when young and wanting books, he accidentally

* The following manuscript note by Lord Byron on this passage, cannot fail to interest the lovers of poetry, as well as the inquirers into the history of the human mind. His lordship's recollections of his first readings will not alter the tendency of my conjecture; it only proves that he had read much more of Eastern history and manners than Ryaut's folio, which probably led to this class of books:

"Knolles—Cantemir—De Tott—Lady M. W. Montagu—Hawkins's translation from Mignot's History of the Turks—The Arabian Nights—all travels or histories or books upon the East I could meet with I had read, as well as Rycaut, before I was *ten years old.* I think the Arabian Nights first. After these I preferred the history of naval actions, Don Quixote, and Smollett's novels, particularly Roderick Random, and I was passionate for the Roman history.

"When a boy I could never bear to read any poetry whatever without disgust and reluctance."—*MS. note by Lord Byron.* Latterly Lord Byron acknowledged in a conversation held in Greece with Count Gamba, not long before he died, "The Turkish History was one of the first books that gave me pleasure when a child; and I believe it had much influence on my subsequent wishes to visit the Levant; and gave perhaps the Oriental colouring which is observed in my poetry."

I omitted the following note in my last edition, but I shall now preserve it, as it may enter into the history of his lordship's character:

"When I was in Turkey I was oftener tempted to turn Mussulman than poet, and have often regretted since that I did not. 1818."

found De Foe's "Essay on Projects," from which work impressions were derived which afterwards influenced some of the principal events of his life. The lectures of Reynolds probably originated in the essays of Richardson. It is acknowledged that these first made him a painter, and not long afterwards an author; and it is said that many of the principles in his lectures may be traced in those first studies. Many were the indelible and glowing impressions caught by the ardent Reynolds from those bewildering pages of enthusiasm! Sir Walter Raleigh, according to a family tradition, when a young man, was perpetually reading and conversing on the discoveries of Columbus, and the conquests of Cortez and Pizarro. His character, as well as the great events of his life, seem to have been inspired by his favourite histories; to pass beyond the discoveries of the Spaniards became a passion, and the vision of his life. It is formally testified that, from a copy of Vegetius *de Re Militari*, in the school library of St. Paul's, Marlborough imbibed his passion for a military life. If he could not understand the text, the prints were, in such a mind, sufficent to awaken the passion for military glory. Rousseau in early youth, full of his Plutarch, while he was also devouring the trash of romances, could only conceive human nature in the colossal forms, or be affected by the infirm sensibility of an imagination mastering all his faculties; thinking like a Roman, and feeling like a Sybarite. The same circumstance happened to Catherine Macauley, who herself has told us how she owed the bent of her character to the early reading of the Roman historians; but combining Roman admiration with English faction, she violated truth in English characters, and exaggerated romance in her Roman. But the permanent effect of a solitary bias in the youth of genius, impelling the whole current of his after-life, is strikingly displayed in the remarkable character of Archdeacon Blackburne,

the author of the famous "Confessional," and the curious "Memoirs of Hollis," written with such a republican fierceness.

I had long considered the character of our archdeacon as a *lusus politicus et theologicus*. Having subscribed to the Articles, and enjoying the archdeaconry, he was writing against subscription and the whole hierarchy with a spirit so irascible and caustic, that one would have suspected that, like Prynne and Bastwick, the archdeacon had already lost both his ears; while his antipathy to monarchy might have done honour to a Roundhead of the Rota Club. The secret of these volcanic explosions was only revealed in a letter accidentally preserved. In the youth of our spirited archdeacon, when fox-hunting was his deepest study, it happened at the house of a relation, that on a rainy day he fell, among other garret lumber, on some worm-eaten volumes which had once been the careful collections of his great-grandfather, an Oliverian justice. "These," says he, "I conveyed to my lodging-room, and there became acquainted with the manners and principles of many excellent old Puritans, and then laid the foundation of my own." The enigma is now solved! Archdeacon Blackburne, in his seclusion in Yorkshire amidst the Oliverian justice's library, shows that we are in want of a Cervantes but not of a Quixote, and Yorkshire might yet be as renowned a country as La Mancha; for political romances, it is presumed, may be as fertile of ridicule as any of the folios of chivalry.

We may thus mark the influence through life of those first unobserved impressions on the character of genius, which every author has not recorded.

Education, however indispensable in a cultivated age, produces nothing on the side of genius. Where education ends, genius often begins. Gray was asked if he recollected when he first felt the strong predilection to poetry; he replied that, "he believed it was when he

began to read Virgil for his own amusement, and not in school hours as a task." Such is the force of self-education in genius, that the celebrated physiologist, John Hunter, who was entirely self-educated, evinced such penetration in his anatomical discoveries, that he has brought into notice passages from writers he was unable to read, and which had been overlooked by profound scholars.*

That the education of genius must be its own work, we may appeal to every one of the family. It is not always fortunate, for many die amidst a waste of talents and the wreck of mind.

> Many a soul sublime
> Has felt the influence of malignant star

An unfavourable position in society is a usual obstruction in the course of this self-education; and a man of genius, through half his life, has held a contest with a bad, or with no education. There is a race of the late-taught, who, with a capacity of leading in the first rank, are mortified to discover themselves only on a level with their contemporaries. Winckelmann, who passed his youth in obscure misery as a village schoolmaster, paints feelings which strikingly contrast with his avocations. "I formerly filled the office of a schoolmaster with the greatest punctuality; and I taught the A, B, C, to children with filthy heads, at the moment I was aspiring after the knowledge of the beautiful, and meditating, low to myself, on the similes of Homer; then I said to myself, as I still say, 'Peace, my soul, thy strength shall surmount

* Life of John Hunter, by Dr. Adams, p. 59, where the case is curiously illustrated. [The writer therein defends Hunter from a charge of plagiarism from the Greek writers, who had studied accurately certain phases of disease, which had afterwards been "overlooked by the most profound scholars for nearly two thousand years," until John Hunter by his own close observation had assumed similar conclusions.]

thy cares.'" The obstructions of so unhappy a self-education essentially injured his ardent genius, and long he secretly sorrowed at this want of early patronage, and these habits of life so discordant with the habits of his mind. "I am unfortunately one of those whom the Greeks named ὀψιμαθεῖς, *sero sapientes*, the late-learned, for I have appeared too late in the world and in Italy. To have done something, it was necessary that I should have had an education analogous to my pursuits, and at your age." This class of the *late-learned* is a useful distinction. It is so with a sister-art; one of the greatest musicians of our country assures me that the ear is as latent with many; there are the late-learned even in the musical world. Budæus declared that he was both "self-taught and late-taught."

The SELF-EDUCATED are marked by stubborn peculiarities. Often abounding with talent, but rarely with talent in its place, their native prodigality has to dread a plethora of genius and a delirium of wit: or else, hard but irregular students rich in acquisition, they find how their huddled knowledge, like corn heaped in a granary, for want of ventilation and stirring, perishes in its own masses. Not having attended to the process of their own minds, and little acquainted with that of other men, they cannot throw out their intractable knowledge, nor with sympathy awaken by its softening touches the thoughts of others. To conduct their native impulse, which had all along driven them, is a secret not always discovered, or else discovered late in life. Hence it has happened with some of this race, that their first work has not announced genius, and their last is stamped with it. Some are often judged by their first work, and when they have surpassed themselves, it is long ere it is acknowledged. They have improved themselves by the very neglect or even contempt which their unfortunate efforts were doomed to meet; and when once they have

learned what is beautiful, they discover a living but unsuspected source in their own wild but unregarded originality. Glorying in their strength at the time that they are betraying their weakness, yet are they still mighty in that enthusiasm which is only disciplined by its own fierce habits. Never can the native faculty of genius with its creative warmth be crushed out of the human soul; it will work itself out beneath the encumbrance of the most uncultivated minds, even amidst the deep perplexed feelings and the tumultuous thoughts of the most visionary enthusiast, who is often only a man of genius misplaced.* We may find a whole race of these self-taught among the unknown writers of the old romances, and the ancient ballads of European nations; there sleep many a Homer and Virgil—legitimate heirs of their genius, though possessors of decayed estates. Bunyan is the Spenser of the people. The fire burned towards Heaven, although the altar was rude and rustic.

Barry, the painter, has left behind him works not to be turned over by the connoisseur by rote, nor the artist who dares not be just. That enthusiast, with a temper of mind resembling Rousseau's, but with coarser feelings, was the same creature of untamed imagination consumed by the same passions, with the same fine intellect disordered, and the same fortitude of soul; but he found his self-taught pen, like his pencil, betray his genius.† A

* "One assertion I will venture to make, as suggested by my own experience, that there exist folios on the human understanding and the nature of man which would have a far juster claim to their high rank and celebrity, if in the whole huge volume there could be found as much fulness of heart and intellect as burst forth in many a simple page of George Fox and Jacob Behmen."—*Mr. Coleridge's Biographia Litteraria*, i. 143.

† Like Hogarth, when he attempted to engrave his own works, his originality of style made them differ from the tamer and more mechanical labours of the professional engraver. They have consequently less beauty, but greater vigour.—ED.

vehement enthusiasm breaks through his ill-composed works, throwing the sparks of his bold conceptions into the soul of the youth of genius. When, in his character of professor, he delivered his lectures at the academy, at every pause his auditors rose in a tumult, and at every close their hands returned to him the proud feelings he adored. This gifted but self-educated man, once listening to the children of genius whom he had created about him, exclaimed, "Go it, go it, my boys! they did so at Athens." This self-formed genius could throw up his native mud into the very heaven of his invention!

But even such pages as those of Barry's are the aliment of young genius. Before we can discern the beautiful, must we not be endowed with the susceptibility of love? Must not the disposition be formed before even the object appears? I have witnessed the young artist of genius glow and start over the reveries of the uneducated Barry, but pause and meditate, and inquire over the mature elegance of Reynolds; in the one he caught the passion for beauty, and in the other he discovered the beautiful; with the one he was warm and restless, and with the other calm and satisfied.

Of the difficulties overcome in the self-education of genius, we have a remarkable instance in the character of Moses Mendelssohn, on whom literary Germany has bestowed the honorable title of "the Jewish Socrates."* So great apparently were the invincible obstructions which barred out Mendelssohn from the world of literature and philosophy, that, in the history of men of

* I composed the life of Mendelssohn so far back as in 1798, in a periodical publication, whence our late biographers have drawn their notices; a juvenile production, which happened to excite the attention of the late Barry, then not personally known to me; and he gave all the immortality his poetical pencil could bestow on this man of genius, by immediately placing in his Elysium of Genius Mendelssohn shaking hands with Addison, who wrote on the truth of the Christian religion, and near Locke, the English master of Mendelssohn's mind.

genius, it is something like taking in the history of man the savage of Aveyron from his woods—who, destitute of a human language, should at length create a model of eloquence; who, without the faculty of conceiving a figure, should at length be capable of adding to the demonstrations of Euclid; and who, without a complex idea and with few sensations, should at length, in the sublimest strain of metaphysics, open to the world a new view of the immortality of the soul!

Mendelssohn, the son of a poor rabbin, in a village in Germany, received an education completely rabbinical, and its nature must be comprehended, or the term of *education* would be misunderstood. The Israelites in Poland and Germany live with all the restrictions of their ceremonial law in an i sulated state, and are not always instructed in the language of the country of their birth. They employ for their common intercourse a barbarous or *patois* Hebrew; while the sole studies of the young rabbins are strictly confined to the Talmud, of which the fundamental principle, like the Sonna of the Turks, is a pious rejection of every species of profane learning. This ancient jealous spirit, which walls in the understanding and the faith of man, was to shut out what the imitative Catholics afterwards called heresy. It is, then, these numerous folios of the Talmud which the true Hebraic student contemplates through all the seasons of life, as the Patuecos in their low valley imagine their surrounding mountains to be the confines of the universe.

Of such a nature was the plan of Mendelssohn's first studies; but even in his boyhood this conflict of study occasioned an agitation of his spirits, which affected his life ever after. Rejecting the Talmudical dreamers, he caught a nobler spirit from the celebrated Maimonides; and his native sagacity was already clearing up the surrounding darkness. An enemy not less hostile to the

enlargement of mind than voluminous legends, presented itself in the indigence of his father, who was compelled to send away the youth on foot to Berlin, to find labour and bread.

At Berlin, Mendelssohn becomes an amanuensis to another poor rabbin, who could only still initiate him into the theology, the jurisprudence, and the scholastic philosophy of his people. Thus, he was as yet no farther advanced in that philosophy of the mind in which he was one day to be the rival of Plato and Locke, nor in that knowledge of literature which was finally to place him among the first polished critics of Germany.

Some unexpected event occurs which gives the first great impulse to the mind of genius. Mendelssohn received this from the companion of his misery and his studies, a man of congenial but maturer powers. He was a Polish Jew, expelled from the communion of the orthodox, and the calumniated student was now a vagrant, with more sensibility than fortitude. But this vagrant was a philosopher, a poet, a naturalist, and a mathematician. Mendelssohn, at a distant day, never alluded to him without tears. Thrown together into the same situation, they approached each other by the same sympathies, and communicating in the only language which Mendelssohn could speak, the Polander voluntarily undertook his literary education.

Then was seen one of the most extraordinary spectacles in the history of modern literature. Two houseless Hebrew youths might be discovered, in the moonlit streets of Berlin, sitting in retired corners, or on the steps of some porch, the one instructing the other, with a Euclid in his hand; but what is more extraordinary, it was a Hebrew version, composed by the master for a pupil who knew no other language. Who could then have imagined that the future Plato of Germany was sitting on those steps!

The Polander, whose deep melancholy had settled on his heart, died—yet he had not lived in vain, since the electric spark that lighted up the soul of Mendelssohn had fallen from his own.

Mendelssohn was now left alone; his mind teeming with its chaos, and still master of no other language than that barren idiom which was incapable of expressing the ideas he was meditating on. He had scarcely made a step into the philosophy of his age, and the genius of Mendelssohn had probably been lost to Germany, had not the singularity of his studies and the cast of his mind been detected by the sagacity of Dr. Kisch. The aid of this physician was momentous; for he devoted several hours every day to the instruction of a poor youth, whose strong capacity he had the discernment to perceive, and the generous temper to aid. Mendelssohn was soon enabled to read Locke in a Latin version; but with such extreme pain, that, compelled to search for every word, and to arrange their Latin order, and at the same time to combine metaphysical ideas, it was observed that he did not so much translate, as guess by the force of meditation.

This prodigious effort of his intellect retarded his progress, but invigorated his habit, as the racer, by running against the hill, at length courses with facility.

A succeeding effort was to master the living languages, and chiefly the English, that he might read his favourite Locke in his own idiom. Thus a great genius for metaphysics and languages was forming itself alone, without aid.

It is curious to detect, in the character of genius, the effects of local and moral influences. There resulted from Mendelssohn's early situation certain defects in his Jewish education, and numerous impediments in his studies. Inheriting but one language, too obsolete and naked to serve the purposes of modern philosophy, he perhaps overvalued his new acquisitions, and in his

delight of knowing many languages, he with difficulty escaped from remaining a mere philologist; while in his philosophy, having adopted the prevailing principles of Wolf and Baumgarten, his genius was long without the courage or the skill to emancipate itself from their rusty chains. It was more than a step which had brought him into their circle, but a step was yet wanting to escape from it.

At length the mind of Mendelssohn enlarged in literary intercourse: he became a great and original thinker in many beautiful speculations in moral and critical philosophy; while he had gradually been creating a style which the critics of Germany have declared to be their first luminous model of precision and elegance. Thus a Hebrew vagrant, first perplexed in the voluminous labyrinth of Judaical learning, in his middle age oppressed by indigence and malady, and in his mature life wrestling with that commercial station whence he derived his humble independence, became one of the master-writers in the literature of his country. The history of the mind of Mendelssohn is one of the noblest pictures of the self-education of genius.

Friends, whose prudential counsels in the business of life are valuable in our youth, are usually prejudicial in the youth of genius. The multitude of authors and artists originates in the ignorant admiration of their early friends; while the real genius has often been disconcerted and thrown into despair by the false judgments of his domestic circle. The productions of taste are more unfortunate than those which depend on a chain of reasoning, or the detail of facts; these are more palpable to the common judgments of men; but taste is of such rarity, that a long life may be passed by some without once obtaining a familiar acquaintance with a mind so cultivated by knowledge, so tried by experience, and so practised by converse with the literary world, that its

prophetic feeling can anticipate the public opinion. When a young writer's first essay is shown, some, through mere inability of censure, see nothing but beauties; others, from mere imbecility, can see none; and others, out of pure malice, see nothing but faults. "I was soon disgusted," says Gibbon, "with the modest practice of reading the manuscript to my friends. Of such friends some will praise for politeness, and some will criticise for vanity." Had several of our first writers set their fortunes on the cast of their friends' opinions, we might have lost some precious compositions. The friends of Thomson discovered nothing but faults in his early productions, one of which happened to be his noblest, the "Winter;" they just could discern that these abounded in luxuriances, without being aware that they were the luxuriances of a poet. He had created a new school in art—and appealed from his circle to the public. From a manuscript letter of our poet's, written when employed on his "Summer," I transcribe his sentiments on his former literary friends in Scotland—he is writing to Mallet: "Far from defending these two lines, I damn them to the lowest depth of the poetical Tophet, prepared of old for Mitchell, Morris, Rook, Cook, Beckingham, and a long &c. Wherever I have evidence, or think I have evidence, which is the same thing, I'll be as obstinate as all the mules in Persia." This poet of warm affections felt so irritably the perverse criticisms of his learned friends, that they were to share alike a poetic Hell—probably a sort of *Dunciad*, or lampoons. One of these "blasts" broke out in a vindictive epigram on Mitchell, whom he describes with a "blasted eye;" but this critic literally having one, the poet, to avoid a personal reflection, could only consent to make the blemish more active—

> Why all not faults, injurious Mitchell! why
> Appears one beauty to thy *blasting* eye?

He again calls him "the planet-blasted Mitchell." Of another of these critical friends he speaks with more sedateness, but with a strong conviction that the critic, a very sensible man, had no sympathy with the poet. "Aikman's reflections on my writings are very good, but he does not in them regard the turn of my genius enough; should I alter my way, I would write poorly. I must choose what appears to me the most significant epithet, or I cannot with any heart proceed." The "Mirror," * when periodically published in Edinburgh, was "fastidiously" received, as all "home-productions" are: but London avenged the cause of the author. When Swift introduced Parnell to Lord Bolingbroke, and to the world, he observes, in his Journal, "it is pleasant to see one who hardly passed for anything in Ireland, make his way here with a little friendly forwarding." Montaigne has honestly told us that in his own province they considered that for him to attempt to become an author was perfectly ludicrous; at home, says he, "I am compelled to purchase printers; while at a distance, printers purchase me." There is nothing more trying to the judgment of the friends of a young man of genius than the invention of a new manner: without a standard to appeal to, without bladders to swim, the ordinary critic sinks into irretrievable distress; but usually pronounces against novelty. When Reynolds returned from Italy, warm with all the excellence of his art, and painted a portrait, his old master, Hudson, viewing it, and perceiving no trace of his own manner, exclaimed that he did not paint so well as when he left England; while another, who conceived no higher excel-

* This weekly journal was chiefly supported by the abilities of the rising young men of the Scottish Bar. Henry Mackenzie, the author of the "Man of Feeling," was the principal contributor. The publication was commenced in January, 1779, and concluded May, 1790.—Ed.

lence than Kneller, treated with signal contempt the future Raphael of England.

If it be dangerous for a young writer to resign himself to the opinions of his friends, he also incurs some peril in passing them with inattention. He wants a Quintilian. One mode to obtain such an invaluable critic is the cultivation of his own judgment in a round of reading and meditation. Let him at once supply the marble and be himself the sculptor: let the great authors of the world be his gospels, and the best critics their expounders; from the one he will draw inspiration, and from the others he will supply those tardy discoveries in art which he who solely depends on his own experience may obtain too late. Those who do not read criticism will rarely merit to be criticised; their progress is like those who travel without a map of the country. The more extensive an author's knowledge of what has been done, the greater will be his powers in knowing what to do. To obtain originality, and effect discovery sometimes requires but a single step, if we only know from what point to set forwards. This important event in the life of genius has too often depended on chance and good fortune, and many have gone down to their graves without having discovered their unsuspected talent. Curran's predominant faculty was an exuberance of imagination when excited by passion; but when young he gave no evidence of this peculiar faculty, nor for several years, while a candidate for public distinction, was he aware of his particular powers, so slowly his imagination had developed itself. It was when assured of the secret of his strength that his confidence, his ambition, and his industry were excited.

Let the youth preserve his juvenile compositions, what ever these may be; they are the spontaneous growth, and like the plants of the Alps, not always found in other soils; they are his virgin fancies. By contemplating

them, he may detect some of his predominant habits, resume a former manner more happily, invent novelty from an old subject he had rudely designed, and often may steal from himself some inventive touches, which, thrown into his most finished compositions, may seem a happiness rather than an art. It was in contemplating on some of their earliest and unfinished productions, that more than one artist discovered with West that "there were inventive touches of art in his first and juvenile essay, which, with all his subsequent knowledge and experience, he has not been able to surpass." A young writer, in the progress of his studies, should often recollect a fanciful simile of Dryden—

> As those who unripe veins in mines explore
> On the rich bed again the warm turf lay,
> Till time digests the yet imperfect ore;
> And know it will be gold another day.

The youth of genius is that "age of admiration" as sings the poet of "Human Life," when the spell breathed into our ear by our genius, fortunate or unfortunate, is—"Aspire!" Then we adore art and the artists. It was Richardson's enthusiasm which gave Reynolds the raptures he caught in meditating on the description of a great painter; and Reynolds thought Raphael the most extraordinary man the world had ever produced. West, when a youth, exclaimed that "A painter is a companion for kings and emperors!" This was the feeling which rendered the thoughts of obscurity painful and insupportable to their young minds.

But this sunshine of rapture is not always spread over the spring of the youthful year. There is a season of self-contest, a period of tremors, and doubts, and darkness. These frequent returns of melancholy, sometimes of despondence, which is the lot of inexperienced genius, is a secret history of the heart, which has been finely

conveyed to us by Petrarch, in a conversation with John of Florence, to whom the young poet often resorted when dejected, to reanimate his failing powers, to confess his faults, and to confide to him his dark and wavering resolves. It was a question with Petrarch, whether he should not turn away from the pursuit of literary fame, by giving another direction to his life.

"I went one day to John of Florence in one of those ague-fits of faint-heartedness which often happened to me; he received me with his accustomed kindness. 'What ails you?' said he, 'you seem oppressed with thought: if I am not deceived, something has happened to you.' 'You do not deceive yourself, my father (for thus I used to call him), and yet nothing newly has happened to me; but I come to confide to you that my old melancholy torments me more than usual. You know its nature, for my heart has always been opened to you; you know all which I have done to draw myself out of the crowd, and to acquire a name; and surely not without some success, since I have your testimony in my favour. Are you not the truest man, and the best of critics, who have never ceased to bestow on me your praise—and what need I more? Have you not often told me that I am answerable to God for the talents he has endowed me with, if I neglected to cultivate them? Your praises were to me as a sharp spur: I applied myself to study with more ardour, insatiable even of my moments. Disdaining the beaten paths, I opened a new road; and I flattered myself that assiduous labour would lead to something great; but I know not how, when I thought myself highest, I feel myself fallen; the spring of my mind has dried up; what seemed easy once, now appears to me above my strength; I stumble at every step, and am ready to sink for ever into despair. I return to you to teach me, or at least advise me. Shall I for ever quit my studies? Shall I strike into some new

course of life? My father, have pity on me! draw me out of the frightful state in which I am lost.' I could proceed no farther without shedding tears. 'Cease to afflict yourself, my son,' said that good man; 'your condition is not so bad as you think: the truth is, you knew little at the time you imagined you knew much. The discovery of your ignorance is the first great step you have made towards true knowledge. The veil is lifted up, and you now view those deep shades of the soul which were concealed from you by excessive presumption. In ascending an elevated spot, we gradually discover many things whose existence before was not suspected by us. Persevere in the career which you entered with my advice; feel confident that God will not abandon you: there are maladies which the patient does not perceive; but to be aware of the disease, is the first step towards the cure.'"

This remarkable literary interview is here given, that it may perchance meet the eye of some kindred youth at one of those lonely moments when a Shakspeare may have thought himself no poet, and a Raphael believed himself no painter. Then may the tender wisdom of a John of Florence, in the cloudy despondency of art, lighten up the vision of its glory!

Ingenuous Youth! if in a constant perusal of the master-writers, you see your own sentiments anticipated —if, in the tumult of your mind, as it comes in contact with theirs, new sentiments arise—if, sometimes, looking on the public favourite of the hour, you feel that within which prompts you to imagine that you could rival or surpass him—if, in meditating on the confessions of every man of genius, for they all have their confessions, you find you have experienced the same sensations from the same circumstances, encountered the same difficulties and overcome them by the same means; then let not your courage be lost in your admiration, but listen to

that "still small voice" in your heart which cries with Correggio and with Montesquieu, "Ed io anche son pittore!"

CHAPTER VII.

Of the irritability of genius.—Genius in society often in a state of suffering.—Equality of temper more prevalent among men of letters.—Of the occupation of making a great name.—Anxieties of the most successful.—Of the inventors.—Writers of learning.—Writers of taste.—Artists.

THE modes of life of a man of genius, often tinctured by eccentricity and enthusiasm, maintain an eternal conflict with the monotonous and imitative habits of society, as society is carried on in a great metropolis, where men are necessarily alike, and where, in perpetual intercourse, they shape themselves to one another.

The occupations, the amusements, and the ardour of the man of genius are at discord with the artificial habits of life; in the vortexes of business, or the world of pleasure, crowds of human beings are only treading in one another's steps. The pleasures and the sorrows of this active multitude are not his, while his are not obvious to them; and his favourite occupations strengthen his peculiarities, and increase his sensibility. Genius in society is often in a state of suffering. Professional characters, who are themselves so often literary, yielding to their predominant interests, conform to that assumed urbanity which levels them with ordinary minds; but the man of genius cannot leave himself behind in the cabinet he quits; the train of his thoughts is not stopped at will, and in the range of conversation the habits of his mind will prevail: the poet will sometimes muse till he modulates a verse; the artist is sketching what a moment presents, and a

moment changes; the philosophical historian is suddenly absorbed by a new combination of thought, and, placing his hands over his eyes, is thrown back into the Middle Ages. Thus it happens that an excited imagination, a high-toned feeling, a wandering reverie, a restlessness of temper, are perpetually carrying the man of genius out of the processional line of the mere conversationists. Like all solitary beings, he is much too sentient, and prepares for defence even at a random touch or a chance hit. His generalising views take things only in masses, while in his rapid emotions he interrogates, and doubts, and is caustic; in a word, he thinks he converses while he is at his studies. Sometimes, apparently a complacent listener, we are mortified by detecting the absent man: now he appears humbled and spiritless, ruminating over some failure which probably may be only known to himself; and now haughty and hardy for a triumph he has obtained, which yet remains a secret to the world. No man is so apt to indulge the extremes of the most opposite feelings: he is sometimes insolent, and sometimes querulous; now the soul of tenderness and tranquillity,—then stung by jealousy, or writhing in aversion! A fever shakes his spirit; a fever which has sometimes generated a disease, and has even produced a slight perturbation of the faculties.* In one of those

* I have given a history of *literary quarrels from personal motives*, in "Quarrels of Authors," p. 529. There we find how many controversies, in which the public get involved, have sprung from some sudden squabbles, some neglect of petty civility, some unlucky epithet, or some casual observation dropped without much consideration, which mortified or enraged the *genus irritabile;* a title which from ancient days has been assigned to every description of authors. The late Dr. Wells, who had some experience in his intercourse with many literary characters, observed, that "in whatever regards the fruits of their mental labours, this is universally acknowledged to be true. Some of the malevolent passions indeed frequently become in learned men more than ordinarily strong, from want of that restraint upon their excitement which society imposes." A puerile critic has reproached me

manuscript notes by Lord Byron on this work, which I have wished to preserve, I find his lordship observing on the feelings of genius, that "the depreciation of the lowest of mankind is more painful than the applause of the highest is pleasing." Such is the confession of genius, and such its liability to hourly pain.

Once we were nearly receiving from the hand of genius the most curious sketches of the temper, the irascible humours, the delicacy of soul, even to its shadowiness, from the warm *sbozzos* of Burns, when he began a diary of the heart,—a narrative of characters and events, and a chronology of his emotions. It was natural for such a creature of sensation and passion to project such a regular task, but quite impossible for him to get through it. The paper-book that he conceived would have recorded all these things turns out, therefore, but a very imperfect document. Imperfect as it was, it has been thought proper not to give it entire. Yet there we view a warm original mind, when he first stepped into the polished circles of society, discovering that he could no longer "pour out his bosom, his every thought and floating fancy, his very inmost soul, with unreserved confidence to another, without hazard of losing part of that respect which man deserves from man; or, from the unavoidable imperfections attending human nature, of one day repenting his confidence." This was the first lesson he learned at Edinburgh, and it was as a substitute for such a human being that he bought a paper-book to keep under lock and key: "a security at least equal," says he, "to the bosom of any friend whatever." Let the man of genius pause over the fragments of this "paper-book;"—it will instruct as much as any open confession of a criminal at the moment he is about to suffer. No man was more afflicted with that

for having drawn my description entirely from my own fancy:—I have taken it from life! See further symptoms of this disease at the close of the chapter on *Self-praise* in the present work.

miserable pride, the infirmity of men of imagination, which is so jealously alive, even among their best friends, as to exact a perpetual acknowledgment of their powers. Our poet, with all his gratitude and veneration for "the noble Glencairn," was "wounded to the soul" because his lordship showed "so much attention, engrossing attention, to the only blockhead at table; the whole company consisted of his lordship, Dunderpate, and myself." This Dunderpate, who dined with Lord Glencairn, might have been a useful citizen, who in some points is of more value than an irritable bard. Burns was equally offended with another patron, who was also a literary brother, Dr. Blair. At the moment, he too appeared to be neglecting the irritable poet "for the mere carcass of greatness, or when his eye measured the difference of their point of elevation; I say to myself, with scarcely any emotion," (he might have added, except a good deal of painful contempt,) "what do I care for him or his pomp either?"—"Dr. Blair's vanity is proverbially known among his acquaintances," adds Burns, at the moment that the solitary haughtiness of his own genius had entirely escaped his self-observation.

This character of genius is not singular. Grimm tells of Marivaux, that though a good man, there was something dark and suspicious in his character, which made it difficult to keep on terms with him; the most innocent word would wound him, and he was always inclined to think that there was an intention to mortify him; this disposition made him unhappy, and rendered his acquaintance too painful to endure.

What a moral paradox, but what an unquestionable fact, is the wayward irritability of some of the finest geniuses, which is often weak to effeminacy, and capricious to childishness! while minds of a less delicate texture are not frayed and fretted by casual frictions; and plain sense with a coarser grain, is sufficient to keep

down these aberrations of their feelings. How mortifying is the list of—

Fears of the brave and follies of the wise!

Many have been sore and implacable on an illusion to some personal defect—on the obscurity of their birth—on some peculiarity of habit; and have suffered themselves to be governed in life by nervous whims and chimeras, equally fantastic and trivial. This morbid sensibility lurks in the temperament of genius, and the infection is often discovered where it is not always suspected. Cumberland declared that the sensibility of some men of genius is so quick and captious, that you must first consider whom they can be happy with, before you can promise yourself any happiness with them: if you bring uncongenial humours into contact with each other, all the objects of society will be frustrated by inattention to the proper grouping of the guests. Look round on our contemporaries; every day furnishes facts which confirm our principle. Among the vexations of Pope was the libel of "the pictured shape;"* and even the robust mind of Johnson could not suffer to be exhibited as "blinking Sam."† Milton must have delighted in contemplating his own person; and the engraver not having reached our sublime bard's ideal grace, he has pointed his indignation in four iambics. The praise of a skipping ape raised the feeling of envy in that child of nature and genius, Goldsmith. Voiture, the son of a vintner, like

* He was represented as an ill-made monkey in the frontispiece to a satire noted in "Quarrels of Authors," p. 286 (last edition).—Ed.

† Johnson was displeased at the portrait Reynolds painted of him which dwelt on his near-sightedness; declaring that "a man's defects should never be painted." The same defect was made the subject of a caricature particularly allusive to critical prejudices in his "Lives of the Poets," in which he is pictured as an owl "blinking at the stars." —Ed.

our Prior, was so mortified whenever reminded of his original occupation, that it was bitterly said, that wine, which cheered the hearts of all men, sickened the heart of Voiture. Akenside ever considered his lameness as an unsupportable misfortune, for it continually reminded him of the fall of the cleaver from one of his father's blocks. Beccaria, invited to Paris by the literati, arrived melancholy and silent, and abruptly returned home. At that moment this great man was most miserable from a fit of jealousy: a young female had extinguished all his philosophy. The poet Rousseau was the son of a cobbler; and when his honest parent waited at the door of the theatre to embrace his son on the success of his first piece, genius, whose sensibility is not always virtuous, repulsed the venerable father with insult and contempt. But I will no longer proceed from folly to crime.

Those who give so many sensations to others must themselves possess an excess and a variety of feelings. We find, indeed, that they are censured for their extreme irritability; and that happy equality of temper so prevalent among MEN OF LETTERS, and which is conveniently acquired by men of the world, has been usually refused to great mental powers, or to fervid dispositions—authors and artists. The man of wit becomes petulant, the profound thinker morose, and the vivacious ridiculously thoughtless.

When Rousseau once retired to a village, he had to learn to endure its conversation; for this purpose he was compelled to invent an expedient to get rid of his uneasy sensations. "Alone, I have never known ennui, even when perfectly unoccupied: my imagination, filling the void, was sufficient to busy me. It is only the inactive chit-chat of the room, when every one is seated face to face, and only moving their tongues, which I never could support. There to be a fixture, nailed with one hand on the other, to settle the state of the weather, or watch the

flies about one, or, what is worse, to be bandying compliments, this to me is not bearable." He hit on the expedient of making lace-strings, carrying his working cushion in his visits, to keep the peace with the country gossips.

Is the occupation of making a great name less anxious and precarious than that of making a great fortune? the progress of a man's capital is unequivocal to him, but that of the fame of authors and artists is for the greater part of their lives of an ambiguous nature. They become whatever the minds or knowledge of others make them; they are the creatures of the prejudices and the predispositions of others, and must suffer from those precipitate judgments which are the result of such prejudices and such predispositions. Time only is the certain friend of literary worth, for time makes the world disagree among themselves; and when those who condemn discover that there are others who approve, the weaker party loses itself in the stronger, and at length they learn that the author was far more reasonable than their prejudices had allowed them to conceive. It is thus, however, that the regard which men of genius find in one place they lose in another. We may often smile at the local gradations of genius; the fervid esteem in which an author is held here, and the cold indifference, if not contempt, he encounters in another place; here the man of learning is condemned as a heavy drone, and there the man of wit annoys the unwitty listener.

And are not the anxieties of even the most successful men of genius renewed at every work—often quitted in despair, often returned to with rapture? the same agitation of the spirits, the same poignant delight, the same weariness, the same dissatisfaction, the same querulous languishment after excellence? Is the man of genius an INVENTOR? the discovery is contested, or it is not comprehended for ten years after, perhaps not during his

whole life; even men of science are as children before him. Sir Thomas Bodley wrote to Lord Bacon, remonstrating with him on his *new mode of philosophising.* It seems the fate of all originality of thinking to be immediately opposed; a contemporary is not prepared for its comprehension, and too often cautiously avoids it, from the prudential motive which turns away from a new and solitary path. Bacon was not at all understood at home in his own day; his reputation—for it was not celebrity—was confined to his history of Henry VII., and his Essays; it was long after his death before English writers ventured to quote Bacon as an authority; and with equal simplicity and grandeur, Bacon called himself "the servant of posterity," Montesquieu gave his *Esprit des Loix* to be read by that man in France, whom he conceived to be the best judge, and in return received the most mortifying remarks. The great philosopher exclaimed in despair, "I see my own age is not ripe enough to understand my work; however it shall be published!" When Kepler published the first rational work on comets, it was condemned, even by the learned, as a wild dream. Copernicus so much dreaded the prejudice of mankind against his treatise on "The Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies," that by a species of continence of all others most difficult to a philosopher, says Adam Smith, he detained it in his closet for thirty years together. Linnæus once in despair abandoned his beloved studies, from a too irritable feeling of the ridicule in which, as it appeared to him, a professor Siegesbeck had involved his famous system. Penury, neglect, and labour Linnæus could endure, but that his botany should become the object of ridicule for all Stockholm, shook the nerves of this great inventor in his science. Let him speak for himself. "No one cared how many sleepless nights and toilsome hours I had passed, while all with one voice declared, that Siegesbeck had annihilated me. I took my

leave of Flora, who bestows on me nothing but Siegesbecks; and condemned my too numerous observations a thousand times over to eternal oblivion. What a fool have I been to waste so much time, to spend my days in a study which yields no better fruit, and makes me the laughing-stock of the world." Such are the cries of the irritability of genius, and such are often the causes. The world was in danger of losing a new science, had not Linnæus returned to the discoveries which he had forsaken in the madness of the mind! The great Sydenham, who, like our Harvey and our Hunter, effected a revolution in the science of medicine, and led on alone by the independence of his genius, attacked the most prevailing prejudices, so highly provoked the malignant emulation of his rivals, that a conspiracy was raised against the father of our modern practice to banish him out of the college, as "guilty of medical heresy." John Hunter was a great discoverer in his own science; but one who well knew him has told us, that few of his contemporaries perceived the ultimate object of his pursuits; and his strong and solitary genius laboured to perfect his designs without the solace of sympathy, without one cheering approbation. "We bees do not provide honey for ourselves," exclaimed Van Helmont, when worn out by the toils of chemistry, and still contemplating, amidst tribulation and persecution, and approaching death, his "Tree of Life," which he imagined he had discovered in the cedar. But with a sublime melancholy his spirit breaks out: "My mind breathes some unheard-of thing within; though I, as unprofitable for this life, shall be buried!" Such were the mighty but indistinct anticipations of this visionary inventor, the father of modern chemistry!

I cannot quit this short record of the fates of the inventors in science, without adverting to another cause of that irritability of genius which is so closely connected with their pursuits. If we look into the history of theo-

ries, we shall be surprised at the vast number which have "not left a rack behind." And do we suppose that the inventors themselves were not at times alarmed by secret doubts of their soundness and stability? They felt, too often for their repose, that the noble architecture which they had raised might be built on moveable sands, and be found only in the dust of libraries; a cloudy day, or a fit of indigestion, would deprive an inventor of his theory all at once; and as one of them said, "after dinner, all that I have written in the morning appears to me dark, incongruous, nonsensical." At such moments we should find this man of genius in no pleasant mood. The true cause of this nervous state cannot, nay, must not, be confided to the world: the honour of his darling theory will always be dearer to his pride than the confession of even slight doubts which may shake its truth. It is a curious fact which we have but recently discovered, that Rousseau was disturbed by a terror he experienced, and which we well know was not unfounded, that his theories of education were false and absurd. He could not endure to read a page in his own "Emile"* without disgust after the work had been published! He acknowledged that there were more suffrages against his notions than for them. "I am not displeased," says he, "with myself on the style and eloquence, but I still dread that my writings are good for nothing at the bottom, and that all my theories are full of extravagance." [*Je crains toujours que je pèche par le fond, et que tous mes systèmes ne sont que des extravagances.*] Hartley with his "Vibrations and Vibratiuncles," Liebnitz with his "Monads," Cudworth with his "Plastic Natures," Malebranche with his paradoxical doctrine of "Seeing all things in God," and Burnet with his heretical "Theory of the Earth," must unquestionably at times

*In a letter by Hume to Blair, written in 1766, apparently first published in the *Literary Gazette*, Nov. 17, 1821.

have betrayed an irritability which those about them may have attributed to temper, rather than to genius.

Is our man of genius—not the victim of fancy, but the slave of truth—a learned author? Of the living waters of human knowledge it cannot be said that "If a man drink thereof, he shall never thirst again." What volumes remain to open! what manuscript but makes his heart palpitate! There is no term in researches which new facts may not alter, and a single date may not dissolve. Truth! thou fascinating, but severe mistress, thy adorers are often broken down in thy servitude, performing a thousand unregarded task-works! Now winding thee through thy labyrinth with a single thread, often unravelling—now feeling their way in darkness, doubtful if it be thyself they are touching. How much of the real labour of genius and erudition must remain concealed from the world, and never be reached by their penetration! Montesquieu has described this feeling after its agony: "I thought I should have killed myself these three months to finish a *morceau* (for his great work), which I wished to insert, on the origin and revolutions of the civil laws in France. You will read it in three hours; but I do assure you that it cost me so much labour that it has whitened my hair." Mr. Hallam, stopping to admire the genius of Gibbon, exclaims, "In this, as in many other places, the masterly boldness and precision of his outline, which astonish those who have trodden parts of the same field, is apt to escape an uninformed reader." Thrice has my learned friend, Sharon Turner, recomposed, with renewed researches, the history of our ancestors, of which Milton and Hume had despaired—thrice, amidst the self-contests of ill-health and professional duties!

The man of erudition in closing his elaborate work is still exposed to the fatal omissions of wearied vigilance, or the accidental knowledge of some inferior mind, and

always to the reigning taste, whatever it chance to be, of the public. Burnet criticised Varillas unsparingly;* but when he wrote history himself, Harmer's "Specimen of Errors in Burnet's History," returned Burnet the pangs which he had inflicted on another. Newton's favourite work was his "Chronology," which he had written over fifteen times, yet he desisted from its publication during his life-time, from the ill-usage of which he complained. Even the "Optics" of Newton had no character at home till noticed in France. The calm temper of our great philosopher was of so fearful a nature in regard to criticism, that Whiston declares that he would not publish his attack on the "Chronology," lest it might have killed our philosopher; and thus Bishop Stillingfleet's end was hastened by Locke's confutation of his metaphysics. The feelings of Sir John Marsham could hardly be less irritable when he found his great work tainted by an accusation that it was not friendly to revelation.† When the learned Pocock published a specimen of his translation of Abulpharagias, an Arabian historian, in 1649, it excited great interest; but in 1663, when he gave the world the complete version, it met with no encouragement: in the course of those thirteen years, the genius of the times had changed, and Oriental studies were no longer in request.

The great Verulam profoundly felt the retardment of his fame; for he has pathetically expressed this sentiment in his testament, where he bequeaths his name to posterity, AFTER SOME GENERATIONS SHALL BE past. Bruce

* For an account of this work, and Burnet's *exposé* of it, see "Curiosities of Literature," vol. i. p. 132.—ED.

† This great work the *Canon Chronicus*, was published in 1672, and was the first attempt to make the Egyptian chronology clear and intelligible, and to reconcile the whole to the Scripture chronology; a labour he had commenced in *Diatriba Chronologica*, published in 1649.—ED.

sunk into his grave defrauded of that just fame which his pride and vivacity perhaps too keenly prized, at least for his happiness, and which he authoritatively exacted from an unwilling public. Mortified and indignant at the reception of his great labour by the cold-hearted scepticism of little minds, and the maliciousness of idling wits, he, whose fortitude had toiled through a life of difficulty and danger, could not endure the laugh and scorn of public opinion; for Bruce there was a simoon more dreadful than the Arabian, and from which genius cannot hide its head. Yet Bruce only met with the fate which Marco Polo had before encountered; whose faithful narrative had been contemned by his contemporaries, and who was long thrown aside among legendary writers.*

Harvey, though his life was prolonged to his eightieth year, hardly lived to see his great discovery of the circulation of the blood established: no physician adopted it; and when at length it was received, one party attempted to rob Harvey of the honour of the discovery, while another asserted that it was so obvious, that they could only express their astonishment that it had ever escaped observation. Incredulity and envy are the evil spirits which have often dogged great inventors to their tomb, and there only have vanished.—But I seem writing the "ca-

* His stories of the wealth and population of China, which he described as consisting of *millions*, obtained for him the nickname of *Marco Milione* among the Venetians and other small Italian states, who were unable to comprehend the greatness of his truthful narratives of Eastern travel. Upon his death-bed he was adjured by his friends to retract his statements, which he indignantly refused. It was long after ere his truthfulness was established by other travellers; the Venetian populace gave his house the name *La Corte di Milioni:* and a vulgar caricature of the great traveller was always introduced in their carnivals, who was termed *Marco Milione;* and delighted them with the most absurd stories, in which everything was computed by millions.—Ed.

lamities of authors," and have only begun the catalogue.

The reputation of a writer of taste is subject to more difficulties than any other. Similar was the fate of the finest ode-writers in our poetry. On their publication, the odes of Collins could find no readers; and those of Gray, though ushered into the reading world by the fashionable press of Walpole, were condemned as failures. When Racine produced his "Athalie," it was not at all relished: Boileau indeed declared that he understood these matters better than the public, and prophesied that the public would return to it: they did so; but it was sixty years afterwards; and Racine died without suspecting that "Athalie" was his masterpiece. I have heard one of our great poets regret that he had devoted so much of his life to the cultivation of his art, which arose from a project made in the golden vision of his youth: "at a time," said he, "when I thought that the fountain could never be dried up."—"Your baggage will reach posterity," was observed.—"There is much to spare," was the answer.

Every day we may observe, of a work of genius, that those parts which have all the raciness of the soil, and as such are most liked by its admirers, are those which are the most criticised. Modest critics shelter themselves under that general amnesty too freely granted, that tastes are allowed to differ; but we should approximate much nearer to the truth, if we were to say, that but few of mankind are prepared to relish the beautiful with that enlarged taste which comprehends all the forms of feeling which genius may assume; forms which may be necessarily associated with defects. A man of genius composes in a state of intellectual emotion, and the magic of his style consists in the movements of his soul; but the art of conveying those movements is far separated from the feeling which inspires them. The idea in the

mind is not always found under the pen, any more than the artist's conception can always breathe in his pencil. Like Fiamingo's image, which he kept polishing till his friend exclaimed, "What perfection would you have?"—"Alas!" exclaimed the sculptor, "the original I am labouring to come up to is in my head, but not yet in my hand."

The writer toils, and repeatedly toils, to throw into our minds that sympathy with which we hang over the illusion of his pages, and become himself. Ariosto wrote sixteen different ways the celebrated stanza descriptive of a tempest, as appears by his MSS. at Ferrara; and the version he preferred was the last of the sixteen. We know that Petrarch made forty-four alterations of a single verse: "whether for the thought, the expression, or the harmony, it is evident that as many operations in the heart, the head, or the ear of the poet occurred," observes a man of genius, Ugo Foscolo. Quintilian and Horace dread the over-fondness of an author for his compositions: alteration is not always improvement. A picture over-finished fails in its effect. If the hand of the artist cannot leave it, how much beauty may it undo! yet still he is lingering, still strengthening the weak, still subduing the daring, still searching for that single idea which awakens so many in the minds of others, while often, as it once happened, the dash of despair hangs the foam on the horse's nostrils. I have known a great sculptor, who for twenty years delighted himself with forming in his mind the nymph his hand was always creating. How rapturously he beheld her! what inspiration! what illusion! Alas! the last five years spoiled the beautiful which he had once reached, and could not stop and finish!

The art of composition, indeed, is of such slow attainment, that a man of genius, late in life, may discover how its secret conceals itself in the habit; how discipline con-

sists in exercise, how perfection comes from experience, and how unity is the last effort of judgment. When Fox meditated on a history which should last with the language, he met his evil genius in this new province. The rapidity and the fire of his elocution were extinguished by a pen unconsecrated by long and previous study; he saw that he could not class with the great historians of every great people; he complained, while he mourned over the fragment of genius which, after such zealous preparation, he dared not complete. Curran, an orator of vehement eloquence, often strikingly original, when late in life he was desirous of cultivating literary composition, unaccustomed to its more gradual march, found a pen cold, and destitute of every grace. Rousseau has glowingly described the ceaseless inquietude by which he obtained the seductive eloquence of his style; and has said, that with whatever talent a man may be born, the art of writing is not easily obtained. The existing manuscripts of Rousseau display as many erasures as those of Ariosto or Petrarch; they show his eagerness to dash down his first thoughts, and the art by which he raised them to the impassioned style of his imagination. The memoir of Gibbon was composed seven or nine times, and, after all, was left unfinished; and Buffon tells us that he wrote his "Epoques de la Nature" eighteen times before it satisfied his taste. Burns's anxiety in finishing his poems was great; "All my poetry," said he, "is the effect of easy composition, but of laborious correction."

Pope, when employed on the *Iliad*, found it not only occupy his thoughts by day, but haunting his dreams by night, and once wished himself hanged, to get rid of Homer: and that he experienced often such literary agonies, witness his description of the depressions and elevations of genius:

> Who pants for glory, finds but short repose;
> A breath revives him, or a breath o'erthrows!

When Romney undertook to commence the first subject for the Shakspeare Gallery, in the rapture of enthusiasm, amidst the sublime and pathetic labouring in his whole mind, arose the terror of failure. The subject chosen was "The Tempest;" and, as Hayley truly observes, it created many a tempest in the fluctuating spirits of Romney. The vehement desire of that perfection which genius conceives, and cannot always execute, held a perpetual contest with that dejection of spirits which degrades the unhappy sufferer, and casts him, grovelling among the mean of his class. In a national work, a man of genius pledges his honour to the world for its performance; but to redeem that pledge, there is a darkness in the uncertain issue, and he is risking his honour for ever. By that work he will always be judged, for public failures are never forgotten, and it is not then a party, but the public itself, who become his adversaries. With Romney it was "a fever of the mad;" and his friends could scarcely inspire him with sufficient courage to proceed with his arduous picture, which exercised his imagination and his pencil for several years. I have heard that he built a painting-room purposely for this picture; and never did an anchorite pour forth a more fervent orison to Heaven, than Romney when this labour was complete. He had a fine genius, with all its solitary feelings, but he was uneducated, and incompetent even to write a letter; yet on this occasion, relieved from his intense anxiety under so long a work, he wrote one of the most eloquent. It is a document in the history of genius, and reveals all those feelings which are here too faintly described.* I once heard an amiable author, whose literary career has perhaps not answered the fond hopes of

* "My Dear Friend,—Your kindness in rejoicing so heartily at the birth of my picture has given me great satisfaction.

"There has been an anxiety labouring in my mind the greater part of the last twelvemonth. At times it had nearly overwhelmed me. I

his youth, half in anger and in love, declare that he would retire to some solitude, where, if any one would follow him, he would found a new order—the order of THE DISAPPOINTED.

Thus the days of a man of genius are passed in labours as unremitting and exhausting as those of the artisan. The world is not always aware, that to some, meditation, composition, and even conversation, may inflict pains undetected by the eye and the tenderness of friendship. Whenever Rousseau passed a morning in society, it was observed, that in the evening he was dissatisfied and distressed; and John Hunter, in a mixed company, found that conversation fatigued, instead of amusing him. Hawkesworth, in the second paper of the "Adventurer," has drawn, from his own feelings, an eloquent comparative estimate of intellectual with corporeal labour; it may console the humble mechanic; and Plato, in his work on "Laws," seems to have been aware of this analogy, for he consecrates all working men or artisans to Vulcan and Minerva, because both those deities alike are hard labourers. Yet with genius all does not terminate, even with the most skilful labour. What the toiling Vulcan and the thoughtful Minerva may want, will too often be absent—the presence of the Graces. In the allegorical picture of the School of Design, by Carlo Maratti, where the students are led through their various studies, in the opening clouds above the academy are seen the Graces, hovering over their pupils, with an inscription they must often recollect—*Senza di noi ogni fatica è vana.*

The anxious uncertainty of an author for his compositions resembles the anxiety of a lover when he has written

thought I should absolutely have sunk into despair. O! what a kind friend is in those times! I thank God, whatever my picture may be, I can say thus much, I am a greater philosopher and a better Christian."

to a mistress who has not yet decided on his claims; he repents his labour, for he thinks he has written too much, while he is mortified at recollecting that he had omitted some things which he imagines would have secured the object of his wishes. Madame De Staël, who has often entered into feelings familiar to a literary and political family, in a parallel between ambition and genius, has distinguished them in this; that while "ambition *perseveres* in the desire of acquiring power, genius *flags* of itself. Genius in the midst of society is a pain, an internal fever which would require to be treated as a real disease, if the records of glory did not soften the sufferings it produces." — "Athenians! what troubles have you not cost me," exclaimed Demosthenes, "that I may be talked of by you!"

These moments of anxiety often darken the brightest hours of genius. Racine had extreme sensibility; the pain inflicted by a severe criticism outweighed all the applause he received. He seems to have felt, what he was often reproached with, that his Greeks, his Jews, and his Turks, were all inmates of Versailles. He had two critics, who, like our Dennis with Pope and Addison, regularly dogged his pieces as they appeared.* Corneille's objections he would attribute to jealousy—at his pieces when burlesqued at the Italian theatre† he would smile outwardly, though sick at heart; but his son informs us, that a stroke of raillery from his witty friend Chapelle, whose pleasantry hardly sheathed its bitterness, sunk more deeply into his heart than the burlesques at the Italian theatre, the protest of Corneille, and the iteration of the two Dennises. More than once Molière

* See the article "On the Influence of a bad temper in Criticism" in "Calamities of Authors," for a notice of Dennis and his career.—Ed.

† See the article on "The Sensibility of Racine" in "Literary Miscellanies" (in the present volume), and that on "Parody," in "Curiosities of Literature," vol. ii., p. 459.—Ed.

and Racine, in vexation of spirit, resolved to abandon their dramatic career; it was Boileau who ceaselessly animated their languor: "Posterity," he cried, "will avenge the injustice of our age!" And Congreve's comedies met with such moderate success, that it appears the author was extremely mortified, and on the ill reception of *The Way of the World*, determined to write no more for the stage. When he told Voltaire, on the French wit's visit, that Voltaire must consider him as a private gentleman, and not as an author,—which apparent affectation called down on Congreve the sarcastic severity of the French author,*—more of mortification and humility might have been in Congreve's language than of affectation or pride.

The life of Tasso abounds with pictures of a complete exhaustion of this kind. His contradictory critics had perplexed him with the most intricate literary discussions, and either occasioned or increased a mental alienation. In one of his letters, we find that he repents the composition of his great poem, for although his own taste approved of that marvellous, which still forms a noble part of its creation, yet he confesses that his cold reasoning critics have decided that the history of his hero, Godfrey, required another species of conduct. "Hence," cries the unhappy bard, "doubts torment me; but for the past, and what is done, I know of no remedy;" and he longs to precipitate the publication, that "he may be delivered from misery and agony." He solemnly swears—"Did not the circumstances of my situation compel me, I would not print it, even perhaps during my life, I so much doubt of its success." Such was the painful state of fear and doubt experienced by the author of the "Jerusalem Delivered," when he gave it to the world; a state of suspense, among the children of im-

* Voltaire quietly said he should not have troubled himself to visit him if he had been merely a private gentleman.—ED.

agination, in which none are more liable to participate than the true sensitive artist. We may now inspect the severe correction of Tasso's muse, in the fac-simile of a page of his manuscripts in Mr. Dibdin's late "Tour." She seems to have inflicted tortures on his pen, supassing even those which may be seen in the fac-simile page which, thirty years ago, I gave of Pope's Homer.* At Florence may still be viewed the many works begun and abandoned by the genius of Michael Angelo; they are preserved inviolate—"so sacred is the terror of Michael Angelo's genius!" exclaims Forsyth. These works are not always to be considered as failures of the chisel; they appear rather to have been rejected for coming short of the artist's first conceptions: yet, in a strain of sublime poetry, he has preserved his sentiments on the force of intellectual labour; he thought that there was nothing which the imagination conceived, that could not be made visible in marble, if the hand were made to obey the mind:—

Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto,
Ch' un marmo solo in se non circoscriva
Col suo soverchio, e solo a quello arriva
La man che obbedisce all' intelletto.

IMITATED.

The sculptor never yet conceived a thought
That yielding marble has refused to aid;
But never with a mastery he wrought—
Save when the hand the intellect obeyed.

An interesting domestic story has been preserved of Gesner, who so zealously devoted his graver and his pencil to the arts. His sensibility was ever struggling after that ideal excellence which he could not attain. Often he sunk into fits of melancholy, and, gentle as he

* It now forms the frontispiece to vol. ii. of the last edition of the "Curiosities of Literature."—ED.

was, the tenderness of his wife and friends could not soothe his distempered feelings; it was necessary to abandon him to his own thoughts, till, after a long abstinence from his neglected works, in a lucid moment, some accident occasioned him to return to them. In one of these hypochondria of genius, after a long interval of despair, one morning at breakfast with his wife, his eye fixed on one of his pictures: it was a group of fauns with young shepherds dancing at the entrance of a cavern shaded with vines; his eye appeared at length to glisten; and a sudden return to good humour broke out in this lively apostrophe—"Ah! see those playful children, they always dance!" This was the moment of gaiety and inspiration, and he flew to his forsaken easel.

La Harpe, an author by profession, observes, that as it has been shown that there are some maladies peculiar to artisans*—there are also some sorrows peculiar to them, and which the world can neither pity nor soften, because they do not enter into their experience. The querulous language of so many men of genius has been sometimes attributed to causes very different from the real ones—the most fortunate live to see their talents contested and their best works decried. Assuredly many an author has sunk into his grave without the consciousness of having obtained that fame for which he had sacrificed an arduous life. The too feeling Smollett has left this testimony to posterity:—"Had some of those, who are pleased to call themselves my friends, been at any pains to deserve the character, and told me ingenuously what I had to expect in the capacity of an *author*, I should, in all probability, have spared myself the *incredible labour* and *chagrin* I

* See Ramazini, "De Morbis Artificium Diatriba," which Dr. James translated in 1750. It is a sad reflection, resulting from this curious treatise, that the arts entail no small mischief upon their respective workmen; so that the means by which they live are too often the occasion of their being hurried out of the world.

have since undergone." And Smollett was a popular writer! Pope's solemn declaration in the preface to his collected works comes by no means short of Smollett's avowal. Hume's philosophical indifference could often suppress that irritability which Pope and Smollett fully indulged.

But were the feelings of Hume more obtuse, or did his temper, gentle as it was by constitution, bear, with a saintly patience, the mortifications his literary life so long endured? After recomposing two of his works, which incurred the same neglect in their altered form, he raised the most sanguine hopes of his History, but he tells us, "miserable was my disappointment!" Although he never deigned to reply to his opponents, yet they haunted him; and an eye-witness has thus described the irritated author discovering in conversation his suppressed resentment—"His forcible mode of expression, the brilliant quick movements of his eyes, and the gestures of his body," these betrayed the pangs of contempt, or of aversion! Hogarth, in a fit of the spleen, advertised that he had determined not to give the world any more original works, and intended to pass the rest of his days in painting portraits. The same advertisement is marked by farther irritability. He contemptuously offers the purchasers of his "Analysis of Beauty," to present them *gratis* with an "eighteenpenny pamphlet," published by Ramsay the painter, written in opposition to Hogarth's principles. So untameable was the irritability of this great inventor in art, that he attempts to conceal his irritation by offering to dispose gratuitously of the criticism which had disturbed his nights.*

* Hogarth was not without reason for exasperation. He was severely attacked for his theories about the curved line of beauty, which was branded as a foolish attempt to prove crookedness elegant, and himself vulgarly caricatured. It was even asserted that the theory was stolen from Lomazzo.—Ed.

Parties confederate against a man of genius,—as happened to Corneille, to D'Avenant,* and Milton; and a Pradon and a Settle carry away the meed of a Racine and a Dryden. It was to support the drooping spirit of his friend Racine on the opposition raised against Phædra, that Boileau addressed to him an epistle "On the Utility to be drawn from the Jealousy of the Envious." The calm dignity of the historian De Thou, amidst the passions of his times, confidently expected that justice from posterity which his own age refused to his early and his late labour. That great man was, however, compelled by his injured feelings, to compose a poem under the name of another, to serve as his apology against the intolerant court of Rome, and the factious politicians of France; it was a noble subterfuge to which a great genius was forced. The acquaintances of the poet Collins probably complained of his wayward humours and irritability; but how could they sympathise with the secret mortification of the poet, who imagined that he had composed his Pastorals on wrong principles, or when, in the agony of his soul, he consigned to the flames with his own hands his unsold, but immortal odes? Can we forget the dignified complaint of the Rambler, with which he awfully closes his work, appealing to posterity?

Genius contracts those peculiarities of which it is so loudly accused in its solitary occupations—that loftiness of spirit, those quick jealousies, those excessive affections and aversions which view everything as it passes in its own ideal world, and rarely as it exists in the mediocrity of reality. If this irritability of genius be a malady which

* See "Quarrels of Authors," p. 403, on the confederacy of several wits against D'Avenant, a great genius; where I discovered that a volume of poems, said "to be written by the author's friends," which had hitherto been referred to as a volume of panegyrics, contains nothing but irony and satire, which had escaped the discovery of so many transcribers of title-pages, frequently miscalled literary historians.

has raged even among philosophers, we must not be surprised at the temperament of poets. These last have abandoned their country; they have changed their name; they have punished themselves with exile in the rage of their disorder. No! not poets only. Descartes sought in vain, even in his secreted life, for a refuge for his genius; he thought himself persecuted in France, he thought himself calumniated among strangers, and he went and died in Sweden; and little did that man of genius think that his countrymen would beg to have his ashes restored to them. Even the reasoning Hume once proposed to change his name and his country; and I believe did. The great poetical genius of our own times has openly alienated himself from the land of his brothers. He becomes immortal in the language of a people whom he would contemn.* Does he accept with ingratitude the fame he loves more than life?

Such, then, is that state of irritability in which men of genius participate, whether they be inventors, men of learning, fine writers, or artists. It is a state not friendly to equality of temper. In the various humours incidental to it, when they are often deeply affected, the cause escapes all perception of sympathy. The intellect-

* I shall preserve a manuscript note of Lord Byron on this passage; not without a hope that we shall never receive from him the genius of Italian poetry, otherwise than in the language of his "*father land*;" an expressive term, which I adopted from the Dutch language some years past, and which I have seen since sanctioned by the pens of Lord Byron and of Mr. Southey.

His lordship has here observed, "It is not my fault that I am obliged to write in English. If I understood my present language equally well, I would write in it; but this will require ten years at least to form a style: no tongue so easy to acquire a little of, or so difficult to master thoroughly, as Italian." On the same page I find the following note: "What was rumoured of me in that language? If true, I was unfit for England: if false, England was unfit for me:—'There is a world elsewhere.' I have never regretted for a moment that country, but often that I ever returned to it at all."

ual malady eludes even the tenderness of friendship. At those moments, the lightest injury to the feelings, which at another time would make no impression, may produce a perturbed state of feeling in the warm temper, or the corroding chagrin of a self-wounded spirit. These are moments which claim the encouragements of a friendship animated by a high esteem for the intellectual excellence of the man of genius; not the general intercourse of society; not the insensibility of the dull, nor the levity of the volatile.

Men of genius are often reverenced only where they are known by their writings—intellectual beings in the romance of life; in its history, they are men! Erasmus compared them to the great figures in tapestry-work, which lose their effect when not seen at a distance. Their foibles and their infirmities are obvious to their associates, often only capable of discerning these qualities. The defects of great men are the consolation of the dunces.

CHAPTER VIII.

The spirit of literature and the spirit of society.—The Inventors.—Society offers seduction and not reward to men of genius.—The notions of persons of fashion of men of genius.—The habitudes of the man of genius distinct from those of the man of society.—Study, meditation, and enthusiasm, the progress of genius.—The disagreement between the men of the world and the literary character.

THE INVENTORS, who inherited little or nothing from their predecessors, appear to have pursued their insulated studies in the full independence of their mind and development of their inventive faculty; they stood apart, in seclusion, the solitary lights of their age. Such were the founders of our literature—Bacon and Hobbes, Newton

and Milton. Even so late as the days of Dryden, Addison, and Pope, the man of genius drew his circle round his intimates; his day was uniform, his habits unbroken; and he was never too far removed, nor too long estranged from meditation and reverie: his works were the sources of his pleasure ere they became the labours of his pride.

But when a more uniform light of knowledge illuminates from all sides, the genius of society, made up of so many sorts of genius, becomes greater than the genius of the individual who has entirely yielded himself up to his solitary art. Hence the character of a man of genius becomes subordinate. A conversation age succeeds a studious one; and the family of genius, the poet, the painter, and the student, are no longer recluses. They mix with their rivals, who are jealous of equality, or with others who, incapable of valuing them for themselves alone, rate them but as parts of an integral.

The man of genius is now trammelled with the artificial and mechanical forms of life; and in too close an intercourse with society, the loneliness and raciness of thinking is modified away in its seductive conventions. An excessive indulgence in the pleasures of social life constitutes the great interests of a luxuriant and opulent age; but of late, while the arts of assembling in large societies have been practised, varied by all forms, and pushed on to all excesses, it may become a question whether by them our happiness is as much improved, or our individual character as well formed as in a society not so heterogeneous and unsocial as that crowd termed, with the sort of modesty peculiar to our times, "a small party:" the simplicity of parade, the humility of pride engendered by the egotism which multiplies itself in proportion to the numbers it assembles.

It may, too, be a question whether the literary man and the artist are not immolating their genius to society when, in the shadowiness of assumed talents—that coun-

terfeiting of all shapes—they lose their real form, with the mockery of Proteus. But nets of roses catch their feet, and a path, where all the senses are flattered, is now opened to win an Epictetus from his hut. The art of multiplying the enjoyments of society is discovered in the morning lounge, the evening dinner, and the midnight coterie. In frivolous fatigues, and vigils without meditation, perish the unvalued hours which, true genius knows, are always too brief for art, and too rare to catch its inspirations. Hence so many of our contemporaries, whose card-racks are crowded, have produced only flashy fragments. Efforts, but not works—they seem to be effects without causes; and as a great author, who is not one of them, once observed to me, "They waste a barrel of gunpowder in squibs."

And yet it is seduction, and not reward, which mere fashionable society offers the man of true genius. He will be sought for with enthusiasm, but he cannot escape from his certain fate—that of becoming tiresome to his pretended admirers.

At first the idol—shortly he is changed into a victim. He forms, indeed, a figure in their little pageant, and is invited as a sort of *improvisatore;* but the esteem they concede to him is only a part of the system of politeness; and should he be dull in discovering the favourite quality of their self-love, or in participating in their volatile tastes, he will find frequent opportunities of observing, with the sage at the court of Cyprus, that "what he knows is not proper for this place, and what is proper for this place he knows not." This society takes little personal interest in the literary character. Horace Walpole lets us into this secret when writing to another man of fashion, on such a man of genius as Gray—"I agree with you most absolutely in your opinion about Gray; he is the worst company in the world. From a melancholy turn, from living reclusely, and from a little too much

dignity, he never converses easily; all his words are measured and chosen, and formed into sentences: his writings are admirable—he himself is not agreeable." This volatile being in himself personified the quintessence of that society which is called "the world,' and could not endure that equality of intellect which genius exacts. He rejected Chatterton, and quarrelled with every literary man and every artist whom he first invited to familiarity —and then hated. Witness the fates of Bentley, of Muntz, of Gray, of Cole, and others. Such a mind was incapable of appreciating the literary glory on which the mighty mind of Burke was meditating. Walpole knew Burke at a critical moment of his life, and he has recorded his own feelings:—"There was a young Mr. Burke who wrote a book, in the style of Lord Bolingbroke, that was much admired. He is a sensible man, but has not *worn off his authorism yet*, and thinks there is nothing so charming as writers, and to be one: *he will know better one of these days.*" Gray and Burke! What mighty men must be submitted to the petrifying sneer—that indifference of selfism for great sympathies—of this volatile and heartless man of literature and rank!

> That thing of silk,
> Sporus, that mere white curd of ass's milk!

The confidential confession of Racine to his son is remarkable:—"Do not think that I am sought after by the great for my dramas; Corneille composes nobler verses than mine, but no one notices him, and he only pleases by the mouth of the actors. I never allude to my works when with men of the world, but I amuse them about matters they like to hear. My talent with them consists, not in making them feel that I have any, but in showing them that they have." Racine treated the great like the children of society; Corneille would not compromise for the tribute he exacted, but he consoled himself when,

at his entrance into the theatre, the audience usually rose to salute him. The great comic genius of France, who indeed was a very thoughtful and serious man, addressed a poem to the painter Mignard, expressing his conviction that "the court," by which a Frenchman of the court of Louis XIV. meant the society we call "fashionable," is fatal to the perfection of art—

> Qui se donne à la cour se dérobe à son art ;
> Un esprit partagé rarement se consomme,
> Et les emplois de feu demandent tout l'homme.

Has not the fate in society of our reigning literary favourites been uniform? Their mayoralty hardly exceeds the year: they are pushed aside to put in their place another, who, in his turn, must descend. Such is the history of the literary character encountering the perpetual difficulty of appearing what he really is not, while he sacrifices to a few, in a certain corner of the metropolis, who have long fantastically styled themselves "the world," that more dignified celebrity which makes an author's name more familiar than his person. To one who appeared astonished at the extensive celebrity of Buffon, the modern Pliny replied, "I have passed fifty years at my desk." Haydn would not yield up to society more than those hours which were not devoted to study. These were indeed but few: and such were the uniformity and retiredness of his life, that "He was for a long time the only musical man in Europe who was ignorant of the celebrity of Joseph Haydn." And has not one, the most sublime of the race, sung,

> che seggendo in piuma,
> In Fama non si vien, nè sotto coltre;
> Sanza la qual chi sua vita consuma
> Cotal vestigio in terra di se lascia
> Qual fummo in aere, ed in acqua la schiuma.
>
> For not on downy plumes, nor under shade
> Of canopy reposing, Fame is won

> Without which, whosoe'er consumes his days,
> Leaveth such vestige of himself on earth
> As smoke in air, or foam upon the wave.*

But men of genius, in their intercourse with persons of fashion, have a secret inducement to court that circle. They feel a perpetual want of having the reality of their talents confirmed to themselves, and they often step into society to observe in what degree they are objects of attention; for though ever accused of vanity, the greater part of men of genius feel that their existence, as such, must depend on the opinion of others. This standard is in truth always problematical and variable; yet they cannot hope to find a more certain one among their rivals, who at all times are adroitly depreciating their brothers, and "dusking" their lustre. They discover among those cultivators of literature and the arts who have recourse to them for their pleasure, impassioned admirers, rather than unmerciful judges—judges who have only time to acquire that degree of illumination which is just sufficient to set at ease the fears of these claimants of genius.

When literary men assemble together, what mimetic friendships, in their mutual corruption! Creatures of intrigue, they borrow other men's eyes, and act by feelings often even contrary to their own: they wear a mask on their face, and only sing a tune they have caught. Some hierophant in their mysteries proclaims their elect whom they have to initiate, and their profane who are to stand apart under their ban. They bend to the spirit of the age, but they do not elevate the public to them; they care not for truth, but only study to produce effect, and they do nothing for fame but what obtains an instant purpose. Yet their fame is not therefore the more real, for everything connected with fashion becomes obsolete. Her ear has a great suscepti-

* Cary's Dante, Canto xxiv.

bility of weariness, and her eye rolls for incessant novelty. Never was she earnest for anything. Men's minds with her become tarnished and old-fashioned as furniture. But the steams of rich dinners, the eye which sparkles with the wines of France, the luxurious night which flames with more heat and brilliancy than God has made the day, this is the world the man of coterie-celebrity has chosen; and the Epicurean, as long as his senses do not cease to act, laughs at the few who retire to the solitary midnight lamp. Posthumous fame is—a nothing! Such men live like unbelievers in a future state, and their narrow calculating spirit coldly dies in their artificial world: but true genius looks at a nobler source of its existence; it catches inspiration in its insulated studies; and to the great genius, who feels how his present is necessarily connected with his future celebrity, posthumous fame is a reality, for the sense acts upon him!

The habitudes of genius, before genius looses its freshness in this society, are the mould in which the character is cast; and these, in spite of all the disguise of the man, will make him a distinct being from the man of society. Those who have assumed the literary character often for purposes very distinct from literary ones, imagine that their circle is the public; but in this factitious public all their interests, their opinions, and even their passions, are temporary, and the admirers with the admired pass away with their season. "Is it not sufficient that we speak the same language," says a witty philosopher, "but we must learn their dialect; we must think as they think, and we must echo their opinions, as we act by imitation." Let the man of genius then dread to level himself to the mediocrity of feeling and talent required in such circles of society, lest he become one of themselves; he will soon find that to think like them will in time become to act like them. But he who in solitude

adopts no transient feelings, and reflects no artificial lights, who is only himself, possesses an immense advantage: he has not attached importance to what is merely local and fugitive, but listens to interior truths, and fixes on the immutable nature of things. He is the man of every age. Malebranche has observed, that "It is not indeed thought to be charitable to disturb common opinions, because it is not truth which unites society as it exists so much as opinion and custom:" a principle which the world would not, I think, disagree with; but which tends to render folly wisdom itself, and to make error immortal.

Ridicule is the light scourge of society, and the terror of genius. Ridicule surrounds him with her chimeras, which, like the shadowy monsters opposing Æneas, are impalpable to his strokes: but remember when the sibyl bade the hero proceed without noticing them, he found these airy nothings as harmless as they were unreal. The habits of the literary character will, however, be tried by the men and women of the world by their own standard: they have no other; the salt of ridicule gives a poignancy to their deficient comprehension, and their perfect ignorance, of the persons or things which are the subjects of their ingenious animadversions. The habits of the literary character seem inevitably repulsive to persons of the world. Voltaire, and his companion, the scientific Madame De Chatelet, she who introduced Newton to the French nation, lived entirely devoted to literary pursuits, and their habits were strictly literary. It happened once that this learned pair dropped unexpectedly into a fashionable circle in the *château* of a French nobleman. A Madame de Staël, the *persifleur* in office of Madame Du Deffand, has copiously narrated the whole affair. They arrived at midnight like two famished spectres, and there was some trouble to put them to supper and bed. They are called apparitions,

because they were never visible by day, only at ten at night; for the one is busied in describing great deeds, and the other in commenting on Newton. Like other apparitions, they are uneasy companions: they will neither play nor walk; they will not dissipate their mornings with the charming circle about them, nor allow the charming circle to break into their studies. Voltaire and Madame de Chatelet would have suffered the same pain in being forced to an abstinence of their regular studies, as this circle of "agréables" would have at the loss of their meals and their airings. However, the *persifleur* declares they were ciphers "en société," adding no value to the number, and to which their learned writings bear no reference.

But if this literary couple would not play, what was worse, Voltaire poured out a vehement declamation against a fashionable species of gambling, which appears to have made them all stare. But Madame de Chatelet is the more frequent victim of our *persifleur*. The learned lady would change her apartment—for it was too noisy, and it had smoke without fire—which last was her emblem. "She is reviewing her *Principia;* an exercise she repeats every year, without which precaution they might escape from her, and get so far away that she might never find them again. I believe that her head in respect to them is a house of imprisonment rather than the place of their birth; so that she is right to watch them closely; and she prefers the fresh air of this occupation to our amusements, and persists in her invisibility till night-time. She has six or seven tables in her apartments, for she wants them of all sizes; immense ones to spread out her papers, solid ones to hold her instruments, lighter ones, &c. Yet with all this she could not escape from the accident which happened to Philip II., after passing the night in writing, when a bottle of ink fell over the despatches; but the lady did not imitate the

moderation of the prince; indeed, she had not written on State affairs, and what was spoilt in her room was algebra, much more difficult to copy out." Here is a pair of portraits of a great poet and a great mathematician, whose habits were discordant with the fashionable circle in which they resided—the representation is just, for it is by one of the coterie itself.

Study, meditation, and enthusiasm,—this is the progress of genius, and these cannot be the habits of him who lingers till he can only live among polished crowds; who, if he bear about him the consciousness of genius, will still be acting under their influences. And perhaps there never was one of this class of men who had not either first entirely formed himself in solitude, or who amidst society will not be often breaking out to seek for himself. Wilkes, no longer touched by the fervours of literary and patriotic glory, suffered life to melt away as a domestic voluptuary; and then it was that he observed with some surprise of the great Earl of Chatham, that he sacrificed every pleasure of social life, even in youth, to his great pursuit of eloquence. That ardent character studied Barrow's Sermons so often as to repeat them from memory, and could even read twice from beginning to end Bailey's Dictionary; these are little facts which belong only to great minds! The earl himself acknowledged an artifice he practised in his intercourse with society, for he said, "when he was young, he always came late into company, and left it early." Vittorio Alfieri, and a brother-spirit, our own noble poet, were rarely seen amidst the brilliant circle in which they were born. The workings of their imagination were perpetually emancipating them, and one deep loneliness of feeling proudly insulated them among the unimpassioned triflers of their rank. They preserved unbroken the unity of their character, in constantly escaping from the proces-

sional *spectacle* of society.* It is no trivial observation of another noble writer, Lord Shaftesbury, that "it may happen that a person may be so much the worse author, for being the finer gentleman."

An extraordinary instance of this disagreement between the man of the world and the literary character, we find in a philosopher seated on a throne. The celebrated Julian stained the imperial purple with an author's ink; and when he resided among the Antiochians, his unalterable character shocked that volatile and luxurious race. He slighted the plaudits of their theatre, he abhorred their dances and their horse-races, he was abstinent even at a festival, and incorrupt himself, perpetually admonished the dissipated citizens of their impious abandonment of the laws of their country. The Antiochians libelled their emperor, and petulantly lampooned his beard, which the philosopher carelessly wore neither perfumed nor curled. Julian, scorning to inflict a sharper punishment, pointed at them his satire of "the Misopogon, or the Antiochian; the Enemy of the Beard," where, amidst irony and invective, the literary monarch bestows on himself many exquisite and characteristic touches. All that the persons of fashion alleged against the literary character, Julian unreservedly confesses—his undressed beard and awkwardness, his obstinacy, his unsociable habits, his deficient tastes, while at the same time he represents his good qualities as so many extravagances. But, in this Cervantic pleasantry of self-reprehension, the imperial philosopher has not failed to show this light and corrupt people that the reason he could not possibly

* In a note which Lord Byron has written in a copy of this work his lordship says, "I fear this was not the case; I have been but too much in that circle, especially in 1812-13-14."

To the expression of "one deep loneliness of feeling," his lordship has marked in the margin "True." I am gratified to confirm the theory of my ideas of the man of genius, by the practical experience of the greatest of our age.

resemble them, existed in the unhappy circumstance of having been subject to too strict an education under a family tutor, who had never suffered him to swerve from the one right way, and who (additional misfortune!) had inspired him with such a silly reverence for Plato and Socrates, Aristotle and Theophrastus, that he had been induced to make them his models. "Whatever manners," says the emperor, "I may have previously contracted, whether gentle or boorish, it is impossible for me now to alter or unlearn. Habit is said to be a second nature; to oppose it is irksome, but to counteract *the study of more than thirty years* is extremely difficult, especially when it has been imbibed with so much attention."

And what if men of genius, relinquishing their habits, could do this violence to their nature, should we not lose the original for a factitious genius, and spoil one race without improving the other? If nature and habit, that second nature which prevails even over the first, have created two beings distinctly different, what mode of existence shall ever assimilate them? Antipathies and sympathies, those still occult causes, however concealed, will break forth at an unguarded moment. Clip the wings of an eagle that he may roost among domestic fowls,—at some unforeseen moment his pinions will overshadow and terrify his tiny associates, for "the feathered king" will be still musing on the rock and the cloud.

The man of genius will be restive even in his trammelled paces. Too impatient amidst the heartless courtesies of society, and little practised in the minuter attentions, he has rarely sacrificed to the unlaughing graces of Lord Chesterfield. Plato ingeniously compares Socrates to the gallipots of the Athenian apothecaries; the grotesque figures of owls and apes were painted on their exterior, but they contained within precious balsams. The man of genius amidst many a circle may exclaim with Themistocles, "I cannot fiddle, but I can make a

little village a great city;" and with Corneille, he may be allowed to smile at his own deficiencies, and even disdain to please in certain conventional manners, asserting that "wanting all these things, he was not the less Corneille."

But with the great thinkers and students, their character is still more obdurate. Adam Smith could never free himself from the embarrassed manners of a recluse; he was often absent, and his grave and formal conversation made him seem distant and reserved, when in fact no man had warmer feelings for his intimates. One who knew Sir Isaac Newton tells us, that "he would sometimes be silent and thoughtful, and look all the while as if he were saying his prayers." A French princess, desirous of seeing the great moralist Nicolle, experienced an inconceivable disappointment when the moral instructor, entering with the most perplexing bow imaginable, silently sank into his chair. The interview promoted no conversation, and the retired student, whose elevated spirit might have endured martyrdom, shrunk with timidity in the unaccustomed honour of conversing with a princess and having nothing to say. Observe Hume thrown into a most ridiculous attitude by a woman of talents and coterie celebrity. Our philosopher was called on to perform his part in one of those inventions of the hour to which the fashionable, like children in society, have sometimes resorted to attract their world by the rumour of some new extravagance. In the present, poor Hume was to represent a sultan on a sofa, sitting between two slaves, who were the prettiest and most vivacious of Parisians. Much was anticipated from this literary exhibition. The two slaves were ready at repartee, but the utter simplicity of the sultan displayed a blockishness which blunted all edge. The phlegmatic metaphysician and historian only gave a sign of life by repeating the same awkward gesture, and the same ridi-

culous exclamation, without end. One of the fair slaves soon discovered the unchangeable nature of the forlorn philosopher, impatiently exclaiming, "I guessed as much, never was there such a calf of a man!"—"Since this affair," adds Madame d'Epinay, "Hume is at present banished to the class of spectators." The philosopher, indeed, had formed a more correct conception of his own character than the volatile sylphs of the Parisian circle, for in writing to the Countess de Boufflers, on an invitation to Paris, he said, "I have rusted on amid books and study; have been little engaged in the active, and not much in the pleasurable, scenes of life; and am more accustomed to a select society than to general companies." If Hume made a ridiculous figure in these circles, the error did not lie on the side of that cheerful and profound philosopher.—This subject leads our inquiries to the nature of *the conversations of men of genius.*

CHAPTER IX.

Conversations of men of genius.—Their deficient agreeableness may result from qualities which conduce to their greatness.—Slow-minded men not the dullest.—The conversationists not the ablest writers.—Their true excellence in conversation consists of associations with their pursuits.

IN conversation the sublime Dante was taciturn or satirical; Butler sullen or caustic; Gray and Alfieri seldom talked or smiled; Descartes, whose habits had formed him for solitude and meditation, was silent; Rousseau was remarkably trite in conversation, not an idea, not a word of fancy or eloquence warmed him; Addison and Moliere in society were only observers; and Dryden has very honestly told us, "My conversation is slow and dull,

my humour saturnine and reserved; in short, I am none of those who endeavour to break jests in company, or make repartees." Pope had lived among "the great," not only in rank but in intellect, the most delightful conversationists; but the poet felt that he could not contribute to these seductive pleasures, and at last confessed that he could amuse and instruct himself much more by another means: "As much company as I have kept, and as much as I love it, I love reading better, and would rather be employed in reading, than in the most agreeable conversation." Pope's conversation, as preserved by Spence, was sensible; and it would seem that he had never said but one witty thing in his whole life, for only one has been recorded. It was ingeniously said of Vaucanson, that he was as much an automaton as any which he made. Hogarth and Swift, who looked on the circles of society with eyes of inspiration, were absent in company; but their grossness and asperity did not prevent the one from being the greatest of comic painters, nor the other as much a creator of manners in his way. Genius, even in society, is pursuing its own operations, and it would cease to be itself were it always to act like others.

Men of genius who are habitually eloquent, who have practised conversation as an art, for some even sacrifice their higher pursuits to this perishable art of acting, have indeed excelled, and in the most opposite manner. Horne Tooke finely discriminates the wit in conversation of Sheridan and Curran, after having passed an evening in their company. "Sheridan's wit was like steel highly polished and sharpened for display and use; Curran's was a mine of virgin gold, incessantly crumbling away from its own richness." Charles Butler, whose reminiscences of his illustrious contemporaries are derived from personal intercourse, has correctly described the familiar conversations of Pitt, Fox, and Burke: "The most inti-

mate friends of Mr. Fox complained of his too frequent ruminating silence. Mr. Pitt talked, and his talk was fascinating. Mr. Burke's conversation was rambling, but splendid and instructive beyond comparison." Let me add, that the finest genius of our times, is also the most delightful man; he is that rarest among the rare of human beings, whom to have known is nearly to adore; whom to have seen, to have heard, forms an era in our life; whom youth remembers with enthusiasm, and whose presence the men and women of "the world" feel like a dream from which they would not awaken. His *bonhomie* attaches our hearts to him by its simplicity; his legendary conversation makes us, for a moment, poets like himself.*

But that deficient agreeableness in social life with which men of genius have been often reproached, may really result from the nature of those qualities which conduce to the greatness of their public character. A thinker whose mind is saturated with knowledge on a particular subject, will be apt to deliver himself authoritatively; but he will then pass for a dogmatist: should he hesitate, that he may correct an equivocal expression, or bring nearer a remote idea, he is in danger of sinking into pedantry or rising into genius. Even the fulness of knowledge has its tediousness. "It is rare," said Malebranche, "that those who meditate profoundly, can explain well the objects they have meditated on; for they hesitate when they have to speak; they are scrupulous to convey false ideas or use inaccurate terms. They do not choose to speak, like others, merely for the sake of talking." A vivid and sudden perception of truth, or a severe scrutiny after it, may elevate the voice, and burst

* This was written under the inspiration of a night's conversation, or rather listening to Sir Walter Scott.—I cannot bring myself to erase what now, alas! has closed in the silence of a swift termination of his glorious existence.

with an irruptive heat on the subdued tone of conversation. These men are too much in earnest for the weak or the vain. Such seriousness kills their feeble animal spirits. Smeaton, a creative genius of his class, had a warmth of expression which seemed repulsive to many: it arose from an intense application of mind, which impelled him to break out hastily when anything was said that did not accord with his ideas. Persons who are obstinate till they can give up their notions with a safe conscience, are troublesome intimates. Often too the cold tardiness of decision is only the strict balancing of scepticism or candour, while obscurity as frequently may arise from the deficiency of previous knowledge in the listener. It was said that Newton in conversation did not seem to understand his own writings, and it was supposed that his memory had decayed. The fact, however, was not so; and Pemberton makes a curious distinction, which accounts for Newton *not always being ready to speak* on subjects of which he was the sole master. "Inventors seem to treasure up in their own minds what they have found out, after another manner than those do the same things that have not this inventive faculty. The former, when they have occasion to produce their knowledge, in some means are obliged immediately to investigate part of what they want. For this they are not equally fit at all times; and thus it has often happened, that such as retain things chiefly by means of a very strong memory, have appeared off-hand more expert than the discoverers themselves."

A peculiar characteristic in the conversations of men of genius, which has often injured them when the listeners were not intimately acquainted with the men, are those sports of a vacant mind, those sudden impulses to throw out paradoxical opinions, and to take unexpected views of things in some humour of the moment. These fanciful and capricious ideas are the grotesque images of

a playful mind, and are at least as frequently misrepresented as they are misunderstood. But thus the cunning Philistines are enabled to triumph over the strong and gifted man, because in the hour of confidence, and in the abandonment of the mind, he had laid his head in the lap of wantonness, and taught them how he might be shorn of his strength. Dr. Johnson appears often to have indulged this amusement, both in good and ill humour. Even such a calm philosopher as Adam Smith, as well as such a child of imagination as Burns, were remarked for this ordinary habit of men of genius; which, perhaps, as often originates in a gentle feeling of contempt for their auditors, as from any other cause. Many years after having written the above, I discovered two recent confessions which confirm the principle. A literary character, the late Dr. Leyden, acknowledged, that "in conversation I often verge so nearly on absurdity, that I know it is perfectly easy to misconceive me, as well as to misrepresent me." And Miss Edgeworth, in describing her father's conversation, observes that, "his openness went too far, almost to imprudence; exposing him not only to be misrepresented, but to be misunderstood. Those who did not know him intimately, often took literally what was either said in sport, or spoken with the intention of making a strong impression for some good purpose." Cumberland, whose conversation was delightful, happily describes the species I have noticed. "Nonsense talked by men of wit and understanding in the hour of relaxation is of the very finest essence of conviviality, and a treat delicious to those who have the sense to comprehend it; but it implies a trust in the company not always to be risked." The truth is, that many, eminent for their genius, have been remarkable in society for a simplicity and playfulness almost infantine. Such was the gaiety of Hume, such the *bonhomie* of Fox; and one who had long lived in a circle of men of genius in

the last age, was disposed to consider this infantine simplicity as characteristic of genius. It is a solitary grace, which can never lend its charm to a man of the world, whose purity of mind has long been lost in a hackneyed intercourse with everything exterior to himself.

But above all, what most offends, is that freedom of opinion which a man of genius can no more divest himself of, than of the features of his face. But what if this intractable obstinacy be only resistance of character? Burns never could account to himself why, "though when he had a mind he was pretty generally beloved, he could never get the art of commanding respect," and imagined it was owing to his deficiency in what Sterne calls "that understrapping virtue of discretion;" "I am so apt to a *lapsus linguæ*," says this honest sinner. Amidst the stupidity of a formal circle, and the inanity of triflers, however such men may conceal their impatience, one of them has forcibly described the reaction of this suppressed feeling: "The force with which it burst out when the pressure was taken off, gave the measure of the constraint which had been endured." Erasmus, that learned and charming writer, who was blessed with the genius which could enliven a folio, has well described himself, *sum naturâ propensior ad jocos quam fortasse deceat*:—more constitutionally inclined to pleasantry than, as he is pleased to add, perhaps became him. We know in his intimacy with Sir Thomas More, that Erasmus was a most exhilarating companion; yet in his intercourse with the great he was not fortunate. At the first glance he saw through affectation and parade, his praise of folly was too ironical, and his freedom carried with it no pleasantry for those who knew not to prize a laughing sage.

In conversation the operations of the intellect with some are habitually slow, but there will be found no difference between the result of their perceptions and those of a quicker nature; and hence it is that slow-minded men

are not, as men of the world imagine, always the dullest. Nicolle said of a scintillant wit, "He vanquishes me in the drawing-room, but surrenders to me at discretion on the stairs." Many a great wit has thought the wit it was too late to speak, and many a great reasoner has only reasoned when his opponent has disappeared. Conversation with such men is a losing game; and it is often lamentable to observe how men of genius are reduced to a state of helplessness from not commanding their attention, while inferior intellects habitually are found to possess what is called "a ready mind." For this reason some, as it were in despair, have shut themselves up in silence. A lively Frenchman, in describing the distinct sorts of conversation of his literary friends, among whom was Dr. Franklin, energetically hits off that close observer and thinker, wary, even in society, by noting down "the silence of the celebrated Franklin." We learn from Cumberland that Lord Mansfield did not promote that conversation which gave him any pains to carry on. He resorted to society for simple relaxation, and could even find a pleasure in dulness when accompanied with placidity. "It was a kind of cushion to his understanding," observes the wit. Chaucer, like La Fontaine, was more facetious in his tales than in his conversation; for the Countess of Pembroke used to rally him, observing that his silence was more agreeable to her than his talk. Tasso's conversation, which his friend Manso has attempted to preserve for us, was not agreeable. In company he sat absorbed in thought, with a melancholy air; and it was on one of these occasions that a person present observing that this conduct was indicative of madness, that Tasso, who had heard him, looking on him without emotion, asked whether he was ever acquainted with a madman who knew when to hold his tongue! Malebranche tells us that one of these mere men of learning, who can only venture to praise antiquity, once said, "I have seen

Descartes; I knew him, and frequently have conversed with him; he was a good sort of man, and was not wanting in sense, but he had nothing extraordinary in him." Had Aristotle spoken French instead of Greek, and had this man frequently conversed with him, unquestionably he would not have discovered, even in this idol of antiquity, anything extraordinary. Two thousand years would have been wanting for our learned critic's perceptions.

It is remarkable that the conversationists have rarely proved to be the abler writers. He whose fancy is susceptible of excitement in the presence of his auditors, making the minds of men run with his own, seizing on the first impressions, and touching the shadows and outlines of things—with a memory where all lies ready at hand, quickened by habitual associations, and varying with all those extemporary changes and fugitive colours which melt away in the rainbow of conversation; with that wit, which is only wit in one place, and for a time; with that vivacity of animal spirits which often exists separately from the more retired intellectual powers—this man can strike out wit by habit, and pour forth a stream of phrase which has sometimes been imagined to require only to be written down to be read with the same delight with which it was heard; but he cannot print his tone, nor his air and manner, nor the contagion of his hardihood. All the while we were not sensible of the flutter of his ideas, the incoherence of his transitions, his vague notions, his doubtful assertions, and his meagre knowledge. A pen is the extinguisher of this luminary.

A curious contrast occurred between Buffon and his friend Montbelliard, who was associated in his great work. The one possessed the reverse qualities of the other: Buffon, whose style in his composition is elaborate and declamatory, was in conversation coarse and careless. Pleading that conversation with him was only a relaxa-

tion, he rather sought than avoided the idiom and slang of the mob, when these seemed expressive and facetious; while Montbelliard threw every charm of animation over his delightful talk: but when he took his seat at the rival desk of Buffon, an immense interval separated them; he whose tongue dropped the honey and the music of the bee, handled a pen of iron; while Buffon's was the soft pencil of the philosophical painter of nature. Cowley and Killegrew furnish another instance. Cowley was embarrassed in conversation, and had no quickness in argument or reply: a mind pensive and elegant could not be struck at to catch fire: while with Killegrew the sparkling bubbles of his fancy rose and dropped.* When the delightful conversationist wrote, the deception ceased. Denham, who knew them both, hit off the difference between them·

> Had Cowley ne'er spoke, Killegrew ne'er writ,
> Combined in one they had made a matchless wit.

Not, however, that a man of genius does not throw out many things in conversation which have only been found admirable when the public possessed them. The public often widely differ from the individual, and a century's opinion may intervene between them. The fate of genius is sometimes that of the Athenian sculptor, who submitted his colossal Minerva to a private party for inspection. Before the artist they trembled for his daring chisel, and the man of genius smiled; behind him they calumniated, and the man of genius forgave. Once fixed in a public place, in the eyes of the whole city, the statue was the

* Killegrew's eight plays, upon which his character as an author rests, have not been republished with one exception—*the Parson's Wedding*—which is given in Dodsley's collection; and which is sufficient to satisfy curiosity. He was a favourite with Charles the Second, and had great influence with him. Some of his witty court jests are preserved, but are too much imbued with the spirit of the age to be quoted here. He was sometimes useful by devoting his satiric sallies to urge the king to his duties.—Ed.

Divinity! There is a certain distance at which opinions, as well as statues, must be viewed.

But enough of those defects of men of genius which often attend their conversations. Must we then bow to authorial dignity, and kiss hands, because they are inked? Must we bend to the artist, who considers us as nothing unless we are canvas or marble under his hands? Are there not men of genius the grace of society and the charm of their circle? Fortunate men! more blest than their brothers; but for this, they are not the more men of genius, nor the others less. To how many of the ordinary intimates of a superior genius who complain of his defects might one say, "Do his productions not delight and sometimes surprise you?—You are silent! I beg your pardon; the *public* has informed you of a great name; you would not otherwise have perceived the precious talent of your neighbour: you know little of your friend but his *name.*" The personal familiarity of ordinary minds with a man of genius has often produced a ludicrous prejudice. A Scotchman, to whom the name of *a* Dr. Robertson had travelled down, was curious to know who he was.—"Your neighbour!"—But he could not persuade himself that the man whom he conversed with was the great historian of his country. Even a good man could not believe in the announcement of the Messiah, from the same sort of prejudice: "Can there anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Suffer a man of genius to be such as nature and habit have formed him, and he will then be the most interesting companion; then will you see nothing but his character. Akenside, in conversation with select friends, often touched by a romantic enthusiasm, would pass in review those eminent ancients whom he loved; he imbued with his poetic faculty even the details of their lives; and seemed another Plato while he poured libations to their memory in the language of Plato, among those whose

studies and feeling were congenial with his own. Romney, with a fancy entirely his own, would give vent to his effusions, uttered in a hurried accent and elevated tone, and often accompanied by tears, to which by constitution he was prone; thus Cumberland, from personal intimacy, describes the conversation of this man of genius. Even the temperate sensibility of Hume was touched by the bursts of feeling of Rousseau; who, he says, "in conversation kindles often to a degree of heat which looks like inspiration." Barry, that unhappy genius! was the most repulsive of men in his exterior. The vehemence of his language, the wildness of his glance, his habit of introducing vulgar oaths, which, by some unlucky association of habit, served him as expletives and interjections, communicated even a horror to some. A pious and a learned lady, who had felt intolerable uneasiness in his presence, did not, however, leave this man of genius that very evening without an impression that she had never heard so divine a man in her life. The conversation happening to turn on that principle of benevolence which pervades Christianity, and on the meekness of the Founder, it gave Barry an opportunity of opening on the character of Jesus with that copiousness of heart and mind which, once heard, could never be forgotten. That artist indeed had long in his meditations an ideal head of Christ, which he was always talking of executing: "It is here!" he would cry, striking his head. That which baffled the invention, as we are told, of Leonardo da Vinci, who left his Christ headless, having exhausted his creative faculty among the apostles, this imaginative picture of the mysterious union of a divine and human nature, never ceased, even when conversing, to haunt the reveries of Barry.

There are few authors and artists who are not eloquently instructive on that class of knowledge or that department of art which reveals the mastery of their life. Their conversations of this nature affect the mind to a distant

period of life. Who, having listened to such, has forgotten what a man of genius has said at such moments? Who dwells not on the single thought or the glowing expression, stamped in the heat of the moment, which came from its source? Then the mind of genius rises as the melody of the Æolian harp, when the winds suddenly sweep over the strings—it comes and goes—and leaves a sweetness beyond the harmonies of art.

The *Miscellanea* of Politian are not only the result of his studies in the rich library of Lorenzo de' Medici, but of conversations which had passed in those rides which Lorenzo, accompanied by Politian, preferred to the pomp of cavalcades. When the Cardinal de Cabassolle strayed with Petrarch about his valley in many a wandering discourse, they sometimes extended their walks to such a distance, that the servant sought them in vain to announce the dinner-hour, and found them returning in the evening. When Helvetius enjoyed the social conversation of a literary friend, he described it as "a chase of ideas." Such are the literary conversations which Horne Tooke alluded to, when he said "I assure you, we find more difficulty to finish than to begin our conversations."

The natural and congenial conversations of men of letters and of artists must then be those which are associated with their pursuits, and these are of a different complexion with the talk of men of the world, the objects of which are drawn from the temporary passions of partymen, or the variable *on dits* of triflers—topics studiously rejected from these more tranquilising conversations. Diamonds can only be polished by their own dust, and are only shaped by the friction of other diamonds; and so it happens with literary men and artists.

A meeting of this nature has been recorded by Cicero, which himself and Atticus had with Varro in the country. Varro arriving from Rome in their neighbourhood somewhat fatigued, had sent a messenger to his friends.

"As soon as we had heard these tidings," says Cicero, "we could not delay hastening to see one who was attached to us by the same pursuits and by former friendship." They set off, but found Varro half way, urged by the same eager desire to join them. They conducted him to Cicero's villa. Here, while Cicero was inquiring after the news of Rome, Atticus interrupted the political rival of Cæsar, observing, "Let us leave off inquiring after things which cannot be heard without pain. Rather ask about what we know, for Varro's muses are longer silent than they used to be, yet surely he has not forsaken them, but rather conceals what he writes."—"By no means!" replied Varro, "for I deem him to be a whimsical man to write what he wishes to suppress. I have indeed a great work in hand (on the Latin language), long designed for Cicero." The conversation then took its natural turn by Atticus having got rid of the political anxiety of Cicero. Such, too, were the conversations which passed at the literary residence of the Medici family, which was described, with as much truth as fancy, as "the Lyceum of philosophy, the Arcadia of poets, and the Academy of painters." We have a pleasing instance of such a meeting of literary friends in those conversations which passed in Pope's garden, where there was often a remarkable union of nobility and literary men. There Thomson, Mallet, Gay, Hooke, and Glover met Cobham, Bathurst, Chesterfield, Lyttleton, and other lords; there some of those poets found patrons, and Pope himself discovered critics. The contracted views of Spence have unfortunately not preserved those literary conversations, but a curious passage has dropped from the pen of Lord Bolingbroke, in what his lordship calls "a letter to Pope," often probably passed over among his political tracts. It breathes the spirit of those delightful conversations. "My thoughts," writes his lordship, "in what order soever they flow, shall be communicated to you

just *as they pass through my mind*—just as they used to be when *we conversed together* on these or any other subject; when *we sauntered alone*, or as we have often done with good Arbuthnot, and the jocose Dean of St. Patrick, among the *multiplied scenes of your little garden.* The theatre is large enough for my ambition." Such a scene opens a beautiful subject for a curious portrait-painter. These literary groups in the garden of Pope, sauntering, or divided in confidential intercourse, would furnish a scene of literary repose and enjoyment among some of the most illustrious names in our literature.

CHAPTER X.

Literary solitude.—Its necessity.—Its pleasures.—Of visitors by profession.—Its inconveniences.

THE literary character is reproached with an extreme passion for retirement, cultivating those insulating habits, which, while they are great interruptions, and even weakeners, of domestic happiness, induce at the same time in public life to a secession from its cares, and an avoidance of its active duties. Yet the vacancies of retired men are eagerly filled by the many unemployed men of the world happily framed for its business. We do not hear these accusations raised against the painter who wears away his days by his easel, or the musician by the side of his instrument; and much less should we against the legal and commercial character; yet all these are as much withdrawn from public and private life as the literary character. The desk is as insulating as the library. Yet the man who is working for his individual interest is more highly estimated than the retired student, whose disinterested pursuits are at least more profitable to the

world than to himself. La Bruyère discovered the world's erroneous estimate of literary labour: "There requires a better name," he says, "to be bestowed on the leisure (the idleness he calls it) of the literary character,—to meditate, to compose, to read and to be tranquil, should be called *working*." But so invisible is the progress of intellectual pursuits and so rarely are the objects palpable to the observers, that the literary character appears to be denied for his pursuits, what cannot be refused to every other. That unremitting application and unbroken series of their thoughts, admired in every profession, is only complained of in that one whose professors with so much sincerity mourn over the brevity of life, which has often closed on them while sketching their works.

It is, however, only in solitude that the genius of eminent men has been formed. There their first thoughts sprang, and there it will become them to find their last: for the solitude of old age—and old age must be often in solitude—may be found the happiest with the literary character. Solitude is the nurse of enthusiasm, and enthusiasm is the true parent of genius. In all ages solitude has been called for—has been flown to. No considerable work was ever composed till its author, like an ancient magician, first retired to the grove, or to the closet, to invocate. When genius languishes in an irksome solitude among crowds, that is the moment to fly into seclusion and meditation. There is a society in the deepest solitude; in all the men of genius of the past

> First of your kind, Society divine!

and in themselves; for there only can they indulge in the romances of their soul, and there only can they occupy themselves in their dreams and their vigils, and, with the morning, fly without interruption to the labour they had reluctantly quitted. If there be not periods when they shall allow their days to melt harmoniously into

each other, if they do not pass whole weeks together in their study, without intervening absences, they will not be admitted into the last recess of the Muses. Whether their glory come from researches, or from enthusiasm, time, with not a feather ruffled on his wings, time alone opens discoveries and kindles meditation. This desert of solitude, so vast and so dreary to the man of the world, to the man of genius is the magical garden of Armida, whose enchantments arose amidst solitude, while solitude was everywhere among those enchantments.

Whenever Michael Angelo, that "divine madman," as Richardson once wrote on the back of one of his drawings, was meditating on some great design, he closed himself up from the world, "Why do you lead so solitary a life?" asked a friend. "Art," replied the sublime artist, "Art is a jealous god; it requires the whole and entire man." During his mighty labour in the Sistine Chapel, he refused to have any communication with any person even at his own house. Such undisturbed and solitary attention is demanded even by undoubted genius as the price of performance. How then shall we deem of that feebler race who exult in occasional excellence, and who so often deceive themselves by mistaking the evanescent flashes of genius for that holier flame which burns on its altar, because the fuel is incessantly supplied?

We observe men of genius, in public situations, sighing for this solitude. Amidst the impediments of the world, they are doomed to view their intellectual banquet often rising before them, like some fairy delusion, never to taste it. The great Verulam often complained of the disturbances of his public life, and rejoiced in the occasional retirement he stole from public affairs. "And now, because I am in the country, I will send you some of my country fruits, which with me are good meditations; when I am in the city, they are choked with

business." Lord Clarendon, whose life so happily combined the contemplative with the active powers of man, dwells on three periods of retirement which he enjoyed; he always took pleasure in relating the great tranquillity of spirit experienced during his solitude at Jersey, where for more than two years, employed on his history, he daily wrote "one sheet of large paper with his own hand." At the close of his life, his literary labours in his other retirements are detailed with a proud satisfaction. Each of his solitudes occasioned a new acquisition; to one he owed the Spanish, to another the French, and to a third the Italian literature. The public are not yet acquainted with the fertility of Lord Clarendon's literary labours. It was not vanity that induced Scipio to declare of solitude, that it had no loneliness for him, since he voluntarily retired amidst a glorious life to his Linternum. Cicero was uneasy amid applauding Rome, and has distinguished his numerous works by the titles of his various villas. Aulus Gellius marked his solitude by his "Attic Nights." The "Golden Grove" of Jeremy Taylor is the produce of his retreat at the Earl of Carberry's seat in Wales; and the "Diversions of Purley" preserved a man of genius for posterity. Voltaire had talents well adapted for society; but at one period of his life he passed five years in the most secret seclusion, and indeed usually lived in retirement. Montesquieu quitted the brilliant circles of Paris for his books and his meditations, and was ridiculed by the gay triflers he deserted; "but my great work," he observes in triumph, "avance à pas de géant." Harrington, to compose his "Oceana," severed himself from the society of his friends. Descartes, inflamed by genius, hires an obscure house in an unfrequented quarter at Paris, and there he passes two years, unknown to his acquaintance. Adam Smith, after the publication of his first work, withdrew into a retirement that lasted ten years: even

Hume rallies him for separating himself from the world; but by this means the great political inquirer satisfied the world by his great work. And thus it was with men of genius long ere Petrarch withdrew to his Val chiusa.

The interruption of visitors by profession has been feelingly lamented by men of letters. The mind, maturing its speculations, feels the unexpected conversation of cold ceremony chilling as March winds over the blossoms of the Spring. Those unhappy beings who wander from house to house, privileged by the charter of society to obstruct the knowledge they cannot impart, to weary because they are wearied, or to seek amusement at the cost of others, belong to that class of society which have affixed no other idea to time than that of getting rid of it. These are judges not the best qualified to comprehend the nature and evil of their depredations in the silent apartment of the studious, who may be often driven to exclaim, in the words of the Psalmist, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency: *for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.*"

When Montesquieu was deeply engaged in his great work, he writes to a friend:—"The favour which your friend Mr. Hein often does me to pass his mornings with me, occasions great damage to my work as well by his impure French as the length of his details."—"We are afraid," said some of those visitors to Baxter, "that we break in upon your time."—"To be sure you do," replied the disturbed and blunt scholar. To hint as gently as he could to his friends that he was avaricious of time, one of the learned Italians had a prominent inscription over the door of his study, intimating that whoever remained there must join in his labours. The amiable Melancthon, incapable of a harsh expression, when he received these idle visits, only noted down the time he

had expended, that he might reanimate his industry, and not lose a day. Evelyn, continually importuned by morning visitors, or "taken up by other impertinencies of my life in the country," stole his hours from his night rest "to redeem his losses." The literary character has been driven to the most inventive shifts to escape the irruption of a formidable party at a single rush, who enter, without "besieging or beseeching," as Milton has it. The late Mr. Ellis, a man of elegant tastes and poetical temperament, on one of these occasions, at his country-house, assured a literary friend, that when driven to the last, he usually made his escape by a leap out of the window; and Boileau has noticed a similar dilemma when at the villa of the President Lamoignon, while they were holding their delightful conversations in his grounds.

> Quelquefois de fâcheux arrivent trois volées,
> Que du parc à l'instant assiègent les allées;
> Alors sauve qui peut, et quatre fois heureux
> Qui sait s'échapper, à quelque antre ignoré d'eux.

Brand Hollis endeavoured to hold out "the idea of singularity as a shield;" and the great Robert Boyle was compelled to advertise in a newspaper that he must decline visits on certain days, that he might have leisure to finish some of his works.*

* This curious advertisement is preserved in Dr. Birch's "Life of Boyle," p. 272. Boyle's labours were so exhausting to his naturally weak frame, and so continuous from his eager desire for investigation, that this advertisement was concocted by the advice of his physician, "to desire to be excused from receiving visits (unless upon occasions very extraordinary) two days in the week, namely, on the forenoon of Tuesdays and Fridays (both foreign post days), and on Wednesdays and Saturdays in the afternoons, that he may have some time, both to recruit his spirits, to range his papers, and fill up the *lacunæ* of them, and to take some care of his affairs in Ireland, which are very much disordered and have their face often changed by the public calamities there." He ordered likewise a board to be placed over his door, with an inscription signifying when he did, and when he did not receive visits.—Ed.

Boccaccio has given an interesting account of the mode of life of the studious Petrarch, for on a visit he found that Petrarch would not suffer his hours of study to be broken into even by the person whom of all men he loved most, and did not quit his morning studies for his guest, who during that time occupied himself by reading or transcribing the works of his master. At the decline of day, Petrarch quitted his study for his garden, where he delighted to open his heart in mutual confidence.

But this solitude, at first a necessity, and then a pleasure, at length is not borne without repining. To tame the fervid wildness of youth to the strict regularities of study, is a sacrifice performed by the votary; but even Milton appears to have felt this irksome period of life; for in the preface to "Smectymnuus," he says:—"It is but justice not to defraud of due esteem the *wearisome labours* and *studious watchings* wherein I have spent and *tired out* almost a whole youth." Cowley, that enthusiast for seclusion, in his retirement calls himself "the Melancholy Cowley." I have seen an original letter of this poet to Evelyn, where he expresses his eagerness to see Sir George Mackenzie's "Essay on Solitude;" for a copy of which he had sent over the town, without obtaining one, being "either all bought up, or burnt in the fire of London."*—"I am the more desirous," he says, "because it is a subject in which I am most deeply interested. Thus Cowley was requiring a

* This event happening when London was the chief emporium of books, occasioned many printed just before the time to be excessively rare. The booksellers of Paternoster-row had removed their stock to the vaults below St. Paul's for safety as the fire approached them. Among the stock was Prynne's records, vol. iii., which were all burnt except a few copies which had been sent into the country, a perfect set has been valued in consequence at one hundred pounds. The rarity of all books published about the era of the great fire of London induced one curious collector, Dr. Bliss, of Oxford, to especially devote himself to gathering such in his library.—Ed.

book to confirm his predilection, and we know he made the experiment, which did not prove a happy one. We find even Gibbon, with all his fame about him, anticipating the dread he entertained of solitude in advanced life. "I feel, and shall continue to feel, that domestic solitude, however it may be alleviated by the world, by study, and even by friendship, is a comfortless state, which will grow more painful as I descend in the vale of years." And again:—"Your visit has only served to remind me that man, however amused or occupied in his closet, was not made to live alone."

Had the mistaken notions of Sprat not deprived us of Cowley's correspondence, we doubtless had viewed the picture of lonely genius touched by a tender pencil.* But we have Shenstone, and Gray, and Swift. The heart of Shenstone bleeds in the dead oblivion of solitude:—"Now I am come from a visit, every little uneasiness is sufficient to introduce my whole train of melancholy considerations, and to make me utterly dissatisfied with the life I now lead, and the life I foresee I shall lead. I am angry, and envious, and dejected, and frantic, and disregard all present things, as becomes a madman to do. I am infinitely pleased, though it is a gloomy joy, with the application of Dr. Swift's complaint, that he is forced to die in a rage, like a rat in a poisoned hole." Let the lover of solitude muse on its picture throughout the year, in this stanza, by the same amiable but suffering poet:—

> Tedious again to curse the drizzling day,
> Again to trace the wintry tracks of snow,
> Or, soothed by vernal airs, again survey
> The self-same hawthorns bud, and cowslips blow.

Swift's letters paint with terrifying colors a picture of solitude; and at length his despair closed with idiotism. Even the playful muse of Gresset throws a sombre querulousness over the solitude of men of genius:—

* See the article on Cowley in "Calamities of Authors."

Je les vois, victimes du génie,
Au foible prix d'un éclat passager,
Vivre isolés, sans jouir de la vie!
Vingt ans d'ennuis pour quelques jours de gloire.

Such are the necessity, the pleasures, and the inconveniences of solitude! It ceases to be a question whether men of genius should blend with the masses of society; for whether in solitude, or in the world, of all others they must learn to live with themselves. It is in the world that they borrow the sparks of thought that fly upwards and perish: but the flame of genius can only be lighted in their own solitary breast.

CHAPTER XI.

The meditations of genius.—A work on the art of meditation not yet produced.—Predisposing the mind.—Imagination awakens imagination.—Generating feelings by music.—Slight habits.—Darkness and silence, by suspending the exercise of our senses, increase the vivacity of our conceptions.—The arts of memory.—Memory the foundation of genius.—Inventions by several to preserve their own moral and literary character.—And to assist their studies.—The meditations of genius depend on habit.—Of the night-time.—A day of meditation should precede a day of composition.—Works of magnitude from slight conceptions.—Of thoughts never written.—The art of meditation exercised at all hours and places.—Continuity of attention the source of philosophical discoveries.—Stillness of meditation the first state of existence in genius.

A CONTINUITY of attention, a patient quietness of mind, forms one of the characteristics of genius. To think, and to feel, constitute the two grand divisions of men of genius—the men of reasoning and the men of imagination. There is a thread in our thoughts, as there is a pulse in our hearts; he who can hold the one, knows

how to think; and he who can move the other, knows how to feel.

A work on the art of meditation has not yet been produced; yet such a work might prove of immense advantage to him who never happened to have more than one solitary idea. The pursuit of a single principle has produced a great system. Thus probably we owe Adam Smith to the French economists. And a loose hint has conducted to a new discovery. Thus Girard, taking advantage of an idea first started by Fenelon, produced his "Synonymes." But while, in every manual art, every great workman improves on his predecessor, of the art of the mind, notwithstanding the facility of practice, and our incessant experience, millions are yet ignorant of the first rudiments; and men of genius themselves are rarely acquainted with the materials they are working on. Certain constituent principles of the mind itself, which the study of metaphysics curiously developes, offer many important regulations in this desirable art. We may even suspect, since men of genius in the present age have confided to us the secrets of their studies, that this art may be carried on by more obvious means than at first would appear, and even by mechanical contrivances and practical habits. A mind well organised may be regulated by a single contrivance, as by a bit of lead we govern the fine machinery by which we track the flight of time. Many secrets in this art of the mind yet remain as insulated facts, which may hereafter enter into an experimental history.

Johnson has a curious observation on the Mind itself. He thinks it obtains a stationary point, from whence it can never advance, occurring before the middle of life. "When the powers of nature have attained their intended energy, they can be no more advanced. The shrub can never become a tree. Nothing then remains but *practice* and *experience;* and perhaps *why they do so little*

may be worth inquiry."* The result of this inquiry would probably lay a broader foundation for this art of the mind than we have hitherto possessed. Adam Ferguson has expressed himself with sublimity:—"The lustre which man casts around him, like the flame of a meteor, shines only while his motion continues; the moments of rest and of obscurity are the same." What is this art of meditation, but the power of withdrawing ourselves from the world, to view that world moving within ourselves while we are in repose? As the artist by an optical instrument, reflects and concentrates the boundless landscape around him, and patiently traces all nature in that small space.

There is a government of our thoughts. The mind of genius can be made to take a particular disposition or train of ideas. It is a remarkable circumstance in the studies of men of genius, that previous to composition they have often awakened their imagination by the imagination of their favourite masters. By touching a magnet, they become a magnet. A circumstance has been recorded of Gray, by Mr. Mathias, "as worthy of all acceptation among the higher votaries of the divine art, when they are assured that Mr. Gray never sate down to compose any poetry without previously, and for a considerable time, reading the works of Spenser." But the circumstance was not unusual with Malherbe, Corneille, and Racine; and the most fervid verses of Homer, and the most tender of Euripides, were often repeated by Milton. Even antiquity exhibits the same exciting intercourse of the mind of genius. Cicero informs us how his eloquence caught inspiration from a constant study of the Latin and Grecian poetry; and it has been recorded of Pompey, who was great even in his youth, that he never undertook any considerable enterprise without

*I recommend the reader to turn to the whole passage, in Johnson's "Letters to Mrs. Thrale," vol. i., p. 296.

animating his genius by having read to him the character of Achilles in the first *Iliad;* although he acknowledged that the enthusiasm he caught came rather from the poet than the hero. When Bossuet had to compose a funeral oration, he was accustomed to retire for several days to his study, to ruminate over the pages of Homer; and when asked the reason of this habit, he exclaimed, in these lines—

——magnam mihi mentem, animumque
Delius inspiret Vates.

It is on the same principle of predisposing the mind, that many have first generated their feelings by the symphonies of music. Alfieri often before he wrote prepared his mind by listening to music: "Almost all my tragedies were sketched in my mind either in the act of hearing music, or a few hours after"—a circumstance which has been recorded of many others. Lord Bacon had music often played in the room adjoining his study: Milton listened to his organ for his solemn inspiration, and music was even necessary to Warburton. The symphonies which awoke in the poet sublime emotions, might have composed the inventive mind of the great critic in the visions of his theoretical mysteries. A celebrated French preacher, Bourdaloue or Massillon, was once found playing on a violin, to screw his mind up to the pitch, preparatory for his sermon, which within a short interval he was to preach before the court. Curran's favourite mode of meditation was with his violin in his hand; for hours together would he forget himself, running voluntaries over the strings, while his imagination in collecting its tones was opening all his faculties for the coming emergency at the bar. When Leonardo da Vinci was painting his "Lisa," commonly called *La Joconde*, he had musicians constantly in waiting, whose light harmonies, by their associations, inspired feelings of

Tipsy dance and revelry.

There are slight habits which may be contracted by genius, which assist the action of the mind; but these are of a nature so trivial, that they seem ridiculous when they have not been experienced: but the imaginative race exist by the acts of imagination. Haydn would never sit down to compose without being in full dress, with his great diamond ring, and the finest paper to write down his musical compositions. Rousseau has told us, when occupied by his celebrated romance, of the influence of the rose-coloured knots of ribbon which tied his portfolio, his fine paper, his brilliant ink, and his gold sand. Similar facts are related of many. Whenever Apostolo Zeno, the predecessor of Metastasio, prepared himself to compose a new drama, he used to say to himself, "*Apostolo! recordati che questa è la prima opera che dai in luce.*"—"Apostolo! remember that this is the first opera you are presenting to the public." We are scarcely aware how we may govern our thoughts by means of our sensations: De Luc was subject to violent bursts of passion; but he calmed the interior tumult by the artifice of filling his mouth with sweets and comfits. When Goldoni found his sleep disturbed by the obtrusive ideas still floating from the studies of the day, he contrived to lull himself to rest by conning in his mind a vocabulary of the Venetian dialect, translating some word into Tuscan and French; which being a very uninteresting occupation, at the third or fourth version this recipe never failed. This was an art of withdrawing attention from the greater to the less emotion; by which, as the interest weakened, the excitement ceased. Mendelssohn, whose feeble and too sensitive frame was often reduced to the last stage of suffering by intellectual exertion, when engaged in any point of difficulty, would in an instant contrive a perfect cessation from thinking, by mechanically going to the window, and counting the tiles upon the roof of his neighbour's house. Such facts

show how much art may be concerned in the government of our thoughts.

It is an unquestionable fact that some profound thinkers cannot pursue their intellectual operations amidst the distractions of light and noise. With them, attention to what is passing within is interrupted by the discordant impressions from objects pressing and obtruding on the external senses. There are indeed instances, as in the case of Priestley and others, of authors who have pursued their literary works amidst conversation and their family; but such minds are not the most original thinkers, and the most refined writers; or their subjects are of a nature which requires little more than judgment and diligence. It is the mind only in its fulness which can brood over thoughts till the incubation produces vitality. Such is the feeling in this act of study. In Plutarch's time they showed a subterraneous place of study built by Demosthenes, and where he often continued for two or three months together. Malebranche, Hobbes, Corneille, and others, darkened their apartment when they wrote, to concentrate their thoughts, as Milton says of the mind, "in the spacious circuits of her musing." It is in proportion as we can suspend the exercise of all our other senses that the liveliness of our conception increases—this is the observation of the most elegant metaphysician of our times; and when Lord Chesterfield advised that his pupil—whose attention wandered on every passing object, which unfitted him for study—should be instructed in a darkened apartment, he was aware of this principle; the boy would learn, and retain what he learned, ten times as well. We close our eyes whenever we would collect our mind together, or trace more distinctly an object which seems to have faded away in our recollection. The study of an author or an artist would be ill placed in the midst of a beautiful landscape; the "Penseroso" of Milton, "hid from day's garish eye," is the

man of genius. A secluded and naked apartment, with nothing but a desk, a chair, and a single sheet of paper, was for fifty years the study of Buffon; the single ornament was a print of Newton placed before his eyes—nothing broke into the unity of his reveries. Cumberland's liveliest comedy, *The West Indian*, was written in an unfurnished apartment, close in front of an Irish turf-stack; and our comic writer was fully aware of the advantages of the situation. "In all my hours of study," says that elegant writer, "it has been through life my object so to locate myself as to have little or nothing to distract my attention, and therefore brilliant rooms or pleasant prospects I have ever avoided. A dead wall, or, as in the present case, an Irish turf-stack, are not attractions that can call off the fancy from its pursuits; and whilst in these pursuits it can find interest and occupation, it wants no outward aid to cheer it. My father, I believe, rather wondered at my choice." The principle ascertained, the consequences are obvious.

The arts of memory have at all times excited the attention of the studious; they open a world of undivulged mysteries, where every one seems to form some discovery of his own, rather exciting his astonishment than enlarging his comprehension. Le Sage, a modern philosopher, had a memory singularly defective. Incapable of acquiring languages, and deficient in all those studies which depend on the exercise of the memory, it became the object of his subsequent exertions to supply this deficiency by the order and method he observed in arranging every new fact or idea he obtained; so that in reality with a very bad memory, it appears that he was still enabled to recall at will any idea or any knowledge which he had stored up. John Hunter happily illustrated the advantages which every one derives from putting his thoughts in writing, "it resembles a tradesman taking stock; without which he never knows either what he pos-

sesses, or in what he is deficient." The late William Hutton, a man of an original cast of mind, as an experiment in memory, opened a book which he had divided into 365 columns, according to the days of the year: he resolved to try to recollect an anecdote, for every column, as insignificant and remote as he was able, rejecting all under ten years of age; and to his surprise, he filled those spaces for small reminiscences, within ten columns; but till this experiment had been made, he never conceived the extent of his faculty. Wolf, the German metaphysician, relates of himself that he had, by the most persevering habit, in bed and amidst darkness, resolved his algebraic problems, and geometrically composed all his methods merely by the aid of his imagination and memory; and when in the daytime he verified the one and the other of these operations, he had always found them true. Unquestionably, such astonishing instances of a well-regulated memory depend on the practice of its art gradually formed by frequent associations. When we reflect that whatever we know, and whatever we feel, are the very smallest portions of all the knowledge we have been acquiring, and all the feelings we have experienced through life, how desirable would be that art which should again open the scenes which have vanished, and revivify the emotions which other impressions have effaced? But the faculty of memory, although perhaps the most manageable of all others, is considered a subordinate one; it seems only a grasping and accumulating power, and in the work of genius is imagined to produce nothing of itself; yet is memory the foundation of Genius, whenever this faculty is associated with imagination and passion; with men of genius it is a chronology not merely of events, but of emotions; hence they remember nothing that is not interesting to their feelings. Persons of inferior capacity have imperfect recollections from feeble impressions. Are not the in-

cidents of the great novelist often founded on the common ones of life? and the personages so admirably alive in his fictions, were they not discovered among the crowd? The ancients have described the Muses as the daughters of Memory; an elegant fiction, indicating the natural and intimate connexion between imagination and reminiscence.

The arts of memory will form a saving-bank of genius, to which it may have recourse, as a wealth which it can accumulate imperceptibly amidst the ordinary expenditure. Locke taught us the first rudiments of this art, when he showed us how he stored his thoughts and his facts, by an artificial arrangement; and Addison, before he commenced his "Spectators," had amassed three folios of materials. But the higher step will be the volume which shall give an account of a man to himself, in which a single observation immediately becomes a clue of past knowledge, restoring to him his lost studies, and his evanescent existence. Self-contemplation makes the man more nearly entire: and to preserve the past, is half of immortality.

The worth of the diary must depend on the diarist; but "Of the things which concern himself," as Marcus Antoninus entitles his celebrated work—this volume, reserved for solitary contemplation, should be considered as a future relic of ourselves. The late Sir Samuel Romilly commenced, even in the most occupied period of his life, a diary of his last twelve years; which he declares in his will, "I bequeath to my children, as it may be serviceable to them." Perhaps in this Romilly bore in mind the example of another eminent lawyer, the celebrated Whitelocke, who had drawn up a great work, entitled "Remembrances of the Labours of Whitelocke, in the Annals of his Life, for the Instruction of his Children." That neither of these family books has appeared,

is our common loss. Such legacies from such men ought to become the inheritance of their countrymen.

To register the transactions of the day, with observations on what, and on whom, he had seen, was the advice of Lord Kaimes to the late Mr. Curwen; and for years his head never reached its pillow without performing a task which habit had made easy. "Our best and surest road to knowledge," said Lord Kaimes, "is by profiting from the labours of others, and making their experience our own." In this manner Curwen tells us he acquired by habit *the art of thinking;* and he is an able testimony of the practicability and success of the plan, for he candidly tells us, "Though many would sicken at the idea of imposing such a task upon themselves, yet the attempt, persevered in for a short time, would soon become a custom more irksome to omit than it was difficult to commence."

Could we look into the libraries of authors, the studios of artists, and the laboratories of chemists, and view what they have only sketched, or what lie scattered in fragments, and could we trace their first and last thoughts, we might discover that we have lost more than we possess. There we might view foundations without superstructures, once the monuments of their hopes! A living architect recently exhibited to the public an extraordinary picture of his mind, in his "Architectural Visions of Early Fancy in the Gay Morning of Youth," and which now were "dreams in the evening of life." In this picture he had thrown together all the architectural designs his imagination had conceived, but which remained unexecuted. The feeling is true, however whimsical such unaccomplished fancies might appear when thrown together into one picture. In literary history such instances have occurred but too frequently: the imagination of youth, measuring neither time nor ability, creates what neither time nor ability can execute. Adam Smith, in the pref-

ace to the first edition of his "Theory of Sentiments," announced a large work on law and government; and in a late edition he still repeated the promise, observing that "Thirty years ago I entertained no doubt of being able to execute everything which it announced." The "Wealth of Nations" was but a fragment of this greater work. Surely men of genius of all others, may mourn over the length of art and the brevity of life!

Yet many glorious efforts, and even artificial inventions, have been contrived to assist and save its moral and literary existence in that perpetual race which genius holds with time. We trace its triumph in the studious days of such men as Gibbon, Sir William Jones, and Priestley. An invention by which the moral qualities and the acquisitions of the literary character were combined and advanced together, is what Sir William Jones ingeniously calls his "Andrometer." In that scale of human attainments and enjoyments which ought to accompany the eras of human life, it reminds us of what was to be learned, and what to be practiced, assigning to stated periods their appropriate pursuits. An occasional recurrence, even to so fanciful a standard, would be like looking on a clock to remind the student how he loiters, or how he advances in the great day's work. Such romantic plans have been often invented by the ardour of genius. There was no communication between Sir William Jones and Dr. Franklin; yet, when young, the self-taught philosopher of America pursued the same genial and generous devotion to his own moral and literary excellence.

"It was about this time I conceived," says Franklin, "the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection," &c. He began a daily journal, in which against thirteen virtues accompanied by seven columns to mark the days of the week, he dotted down what he considered to be his failures; he found himself fuller of

faults than he had imagined, but at length his blots diminished. This self-examination, or this "Faultbook," as Lord Shaftesbury would have called it, was always carried about him. These books still exist. An additional contrivance was that of journalising his twenty-four hours, of which he has furnished us both with descriptions and specimens of the method; and he closes with a solemn assurance, that "It may be well my posterity should be informed, that to this *little artifice* their ancestor owes the constant felicity of his life." Thus we see the fancy of Jones and the sense of Franklin, unconnected either by character or communication, but acted on by the same glorious feeling to create their own moral and literary character, inventing similar although extraordinary methods.

The memorials of Gibbon and Priestley present us with the experience and the habits of the literary character. "What I have known," says Dr. Priestley, "with respect to myself, has tended much to lessen both my admiration and my contempt of others. Could we have entered into the mind of Sir Isaac Newton, and have traced all the steps by which he produced his great works, we might see nothing very extraordinary in the process." Our student, with an ingenuous simplicity, opens to us that "variety of mechanical expedients by which he secured and arranged his thoughts," and that discipline of the mind, by means of a peculiar arrangement of his studies for the day and for the year, in which he rival led the calm and unalterable system pursued by Gibbon, Buffon, and Voltaire, who often only combined the knowledge they obtained by humble methods. They knew what to ask for; and where what is wanted may be found: they made use of an intelligent secretary; aware, as Lord Bacon has expressed it, that some books "may be read by deputy."

Buffon laid down an excellent rule to obtain originality,

when he advised the writer first to exhaust his own thoughts, before he attempted to consult other writers; and Gibbon, the most experienced reader of all our writers, offers the same important advice to an author. When engaged on a particular subject, he tells us, "I suspended my perusal of any new book on the subject, till I had reviewed all that I knew, or believed, or had thought on it, that I might be qualified to discern how much the authors added to my original stock." The advice of Lord Bacon, that we should pursue our studies in whatever disposition the mind may be, is excellent. If happily disposed, we shall gain a great step; and if indisposed, we "shall work out the knots and strands of the mind, and make the middle times the more pleasant." Some active lives have passed away in incessant competition, like those of Mozart, Cicero, and Voltaire, who were restless, perhaps unhappy, when their genius was quiescent. To such minds the constant zeal they bring to their labour supplies the absence of that inspiration which cannot always be the same, nor always at its height.

Industry is the feature by which the ancients so frequently describe an eminent character; such phrases as "*incredibili industria; diligentia singulari*," are usual. We of these days cannot conceive the industry of Cicero; but he has himself told us that he suffered no moments of his leisure to escape from him. Not only his spare hours were consecrated to his books; but even on days of business he would take a few turns in his walk, to meditate or to dictate; many of his letters are dated before daylight, some from the senate, at his meals, and amid his morning levées. The dawn of day was the summons of study to Sir William Jones. John Hunter, who was constantly engaged in the search and consideration of new facts, described what was passing in his mind by a remarkable illustration:—he said to

Abernethy, "My mind is like a bee-hive." A simile which was singularly correct; "for," observes Abernethy, "in the midst of buzz and apparent confusion there was great order, regularity of structure, and abundant food, collected with incessant industry from the choicest stores of nature." Thus one man of genius is the ablest commentator on the thoughts and feelings of another. When we reflect on the magnitude of the labours of Cicero and the elder Pliny, on those of Erasmus, Petrarch, Baronius, Lord Bacon, Usher, and Bayle, we seem at the base of these monuments of study, we seem scarcely awake to admire. These were the laborious instructors of mankind; their age has closed.

Yet let not those other artists of the mind, who work in the airy looms of fancy and wit, imagine that they are weaving their webs, without the direction of a principle, and without a secret habit which they have acquired, and which some have imagined, by its quickness and facility, to be an instinct. "Habit," says Reid, "differs from instinct, not in its nature, but in its origin; the last being natural, the first acquired." What we are accustomed to do, gives a facility and proneness to do on like occasions; and there may be even an art, unperceived by themselves, in opening and pursuing a scene of pure invention, and even in the happiest turns of wit. One who had all the experience of such an artist has employed the very terms we have used, of "mechanical" and "habitual." "Be assured," says Goldsmith, "that wit is in some measure mechanical; and that a man long habituated to catch at even its resemblance, will at last be happy enough to possess the substance. By a long habit of writing he acquires a justness of thinking, and a mastery of manner which holiday writers, even with ten times his genius, may vainly attempt to equal." The wit of Butler was not extemporaneous, but painfully elaborated from notes which he incessantly accumulated;

and the familiar *rime* of Berni, the burlesque poet, his existing manuscripts will prove, were produced by perpetual re-touches. Even in the sublime efforts of imagination, this art of meditation may be practised; and Alfieri has shown us, that in those energetic tragic dramas which were often produced in a state of enthusiasm, he pursued a regulated process. "All my tragedies have been composed three times;" and he describes the three stages of conception, development, and versifying. "After these three operations, I proceed, like other authors, to publish, correct, or amend."

"All is habit in mankind, even virtue itself!" exclaimed Metastasio; and we may add, even the meditations of genius. Some of its boldest conceptions are indeed fortuitous, starting up and vanishing almost in the perception; like that giant form, sometimes seen amidst the glaciers, afar from the opposite traveller, moving as he moves, stopping as he stops, yet, in a moment lost, and perhaps never more seen, although but his own reflection! Often in the still obscurity of the night, the ideas, the studies, the whole history of the day, is acted over again. There are probably few mathematicians who have not dreamed of an interesting problem, observes Professor Dugald Stewart. In these vivid scenes we are often so completely converted into spectators, that a great poetical contemporary of our country thinks that even his dreams should not pass away unnoticed, and keeps what he calls a register of nocturnals. Tasso has recorded some of his poetical dreams, which were often disturbed by waking himself in repeating a verse aloud. "This night I awaked with this verse in my mouth—

> *E i duo che manda il nero adusto suolo.*
> The two, the *dark* and burning soil has sent."

He discovered that the epithet *black* was not suitable;

"I again fell asleep, and in a dream I read in Strabo that the sand of Ethiopia and Arabia is extremely *white*, and this morning I have found the place. You see what learned dreams I have."

But incidents of this nature are not peculiar to this great bard. The *improvvisatori* poets, we are told, cannot sleep after an evening's effusion; the rhymes are still ringing in their ears, and imagination, if they have any, will still haunt them. Their previous state of excitement breaks into the calm of sleep; for, like the ocean, when its swell is subsiding, the waves still heave and beat. A poet, whether a Milton or a Blackmore, will ever find that his muse will visit his "slumbers nightly." His fate is much harder than that of the great minister, Sir Robert Walpole, who on retiring to rest could throw aside his political intrigues with his clothes; but Sir Robert, to judge by his portrait and anecdotes of him, had a sleekiness and good-humour, and an unalterable equanimity of countenance, not the portion of men of genius: indeed one of these has regretted that his sleep was so profound as not to be interrupted by dreams; from a throng of fantastic ideas he imagined that he could have drawn new sources of poetic imagery. The historian De Thou was one of those great literary characters who, all his life, was preparing to write the history which he afterwards composed; omitting nothing, in his travels and his embassies, which went to the formation of a great man. De Thou has given a very curious account of his dreams. Such was his passion for study, and his ardent admiration of the great men whom he conversed with, that he often imagined in his sleep that he was travelling in Italy, Germany, and in England, where he saw and consulted the learned, and examined their curious libraries. He had all his lifetime these literary dreams, but more particularly in his travels they reflected these images of the day.

If memory do not chain down these hurrying fading children of the imagination, and

Snatch the faithless fugitives to light

with the beams of the morning, the mind suddenly finds itself forsaken and solitary.* Rousseau has uttered a complaint on this occasion. Full of enthusiasm, he devoted to the subject of his thoughts, as was his custom, the long sleepless intervals of his nights. Meditating in bed with his eyes closed, he turned over his periods in a tumult of ideas; but when he rose and had dressed, all was vanished; and when he sat down to his breakfast he had nothing to write. Thus genius has its vespers and its vigils, as well as its matins, which we have been so often told are the true hours of its inspiration; but every hour may be full of inspiration for him who knows to meditate. No man was more practised in this art of the mind than Pope, and even the night was not an unregarded portion of his poetical existence, not less than with Leonardo da Vinci, who tells us how often he found the use of recollecting the ideas of what he had considered in the day after he had retired to bed, encompassed by the silence and obscurity of the night. Sleepless nights are the portion of genius when engaged in its work; the train of reasoning is still pursued; the images of fancy catch a fresh illumination; and even a happy expression shall linger in the ear of him who turns about for the soft composure to which his troubled spirit cannot settle.

But while with genius so much seems fortuitous, in its great operations the march of the mind appears regular,

* One of the most extraordinary instances of inspiration in dreams is told of Tartini, the Italian musician, whose "Devil's Sonata" is well known to musicians. He dreamed that the father of evil played this piece to him, and upon waking he put it on paper. It is a strange wild performance, possessing great originality and vigour.—Ed.

and requires preparation. The intellectual faculties are not always co-existent, or do not always act simultaneously. Whenever any particular faculty is highly active, while the others are languid, the work, as a work of genius, may be very deficient. Hence the faculties, in whatever degree they exist, are unquestionably enlarged by *meditation*. It seems trivial to observe that meditation should precede composition, but we are not always aware of its importance; the truth is, that it is a difficulty unless it be a habit. We write, and we find we have written ill; we re-write, and feel we have written well: in the second act of composition we have acquired the necessary meditation. Still we rarely carry on our meditation so far as its practice would enable us. Many works of mediocrity might have approached to excellence, had this art of the mind been exercised. Many volatile writers might have reached even to deep thinking, had they bestowed a day of meditation before a day of composition, and thus engendered their thoughts. Many productions of genius have originally been enveloped in feebleness and obscurity, which have only been brought to perfection by repeated acts of the mind. There is a maxim of Confucius, which in the translation seems quaint, but which is pregnant with sense—

> Labour, but slight not meditation;
> Meditate, but slight not labour.

Few works of magnitude presented themselves at once, in their extent and with their associations, to their authors. Two or three striking circumstances, unobserved before, are perhaps all which the man of genius perceives. It is in revolving the subject that the whole mind becomes gradually agitated; as a summer landscape, at the break of day, is wrapped in mist: at first, the sun strikes on a single object, but the light and warmth increasing, the whole scene glows in the noonday

of imagination. How beautifully this state of the mind, in the progress of composition, is described by Dryden, alluding to his work, "when it was only a confused mass of thoughts, tumbling over one another in the dark; when the fancy was yet in its first work, moving the sleeping images of things towards the light, there to be distinguished, and then either to be chosen or rejected by the judgment!" At that moment, he adds, "I was in that eagerness of imagination which, by over-pleasing fanciful men, flatters them into the danger of writing." Gibbon tells us of his history, "At the onset all was dark and doubtful; even the title of the work, the true era of the decline and fall of the empire, &c. I was often tempted to cast away the labour of seven years." Winckelmann was long lost in composing his "History of Art;" a hundred fruitless attempts were made, before he could discover a plan amidst the labyrinth. Slight conceptions kindle finished works. A lady asking for a few verses on rural topics of the Abbé de Lille, his specimens pleased, and sketches heaped on sketches produced "Les Jardins." In writing the "Pleasures of Memory," as it happened with "The Rape of the Lock," the poet at first proposed a simple description in a few lines, till conducted by meditation the perfect composition of several years closed in that fine poem. That still valuable work *L'Art de Penser* of the Port-Royal, was originally projected to teach a young nobleman all that was practically useful in the art of logic in a few days, and was intended to have been written in one morning by the great Arnauld; but to that profound thinker so many new ideas crowded in that slight task, that he was compelled to call in his friend Nicolle; and thus a few projected pages closed in a volume so excellent, that our elegant metaphysician has recently declared, that "it is hardly possible to estimate the merits too highly." Pemberton, who knew Newton intimately,

informs us that his Treatise on Natural Philosophy, full of a variety of profound inventions, was composed by him from scarcely any other materials than the *few propositions he had set down several years before*, and which having resumed, occupied him in writing one year and a half. A curious circumstance has been preserved in the life of the other immortal man in philosophy, Lord Bacon. When young, he wrote a letter to Father Fulgentio concerning an Essay of his, to which he gave the title of "The Greatest Birth of Time," a title which he censures as too pompous. The Essay itself is lost, but it was the first outline of that great design which he afterwards pursued and finished in his "Instauration of the Sciences." Locke himself has informed us, that his great work on "The Human Understanding," when he first put pen to paper, he thought "would have been contained in one sheet, but that the farther he went on, the larger prospect he had." In this manner it would be beautiful to trace the history of the human mind, and observe how a Newton and a Bacon and a Locke were proceeding for thirty years together, in accumulating truth upon truth, and finally building up these fabrics of their invention.

Were it possible to collect some thoughts of great thinkers, which were never written, we should discover vivid conceptions, and an originality they never dared to pursue in their works! Artists have this advantage over authors, that their virgin fancies, their chance felicities, which labour cannot afterwards produce, are constantly perpetuated; and those "studies," as they are called, are as precious to posterity as their more complete designs. In literature we possess one remarkable evidence of these fortuitous thoughts of genius. Pope and Swift, being in the country together, observed, that if contemplative men were to notice "the thoughts which suddenly present themselves to their minds when walking in the

fields, &c., they might find many as well worth preserving as some of their more deliberate reflections." They made a trial, and agreed to write down such involuntary thoughts as occurred during their stay there. These furnished out the "Thoughts" in Pope's and Swift's Miscellanies.* Among Lord Bacon's Remains, we find a paper entitled "*Sudden Thoughts*, set down for Profit." At all hours, by the side of Voltaire's bed, or on his table, stood his pen and ink with slips of paper. The margins of his books were covered with his "sudden thoughts." Cicero, in reading, constantly took notes and made comments. There is an art of reading, as well as an art of thinking, and an art of writing.

The art of meditation may be exercised at all hours, and in all places; and men of genius, in their walks, at table, and amidst assemblies, turning the eye of the mind inwards, can form an artificial solitude; retired amidst a crowd, calm amidst distraction, and wise amidst folly. When Domenichino was reproached for his dilatory habits, in not finishing a great picture for which he had contracted, his reply described this method of study: *Eh! Io la sto continuamente dipingendo entro di me*—I am continually painting it within myself. Hogarth, with an eye always awake to the ridiculous, would catch a character on his thumb-nail. Leonardo da Vinci has left a great number of little books which he usually carried in his girdle, that he might instantly sketch whatever he wished to recal to his recollection; and Amoretti discovered, that, in these light sketches, this fine genius was forming a system of physiognomy which he frequently inculcated to his pupils.† Haydn carefully

* This anecdote is found in Ruffhead's "Life of Pope," evidently given by Warburton, as was everything of personal knowledge in that tasteless volume of a mere lawyer, who presumed to write the life of a poet.

† A collection of sixty-four of these sketches were published at

noted down in a pocket-book the passages and ideas which came to him in his walks or amid company. Some of the great actions of men of this habit of mind were first meditated on amidst the noise of a convivial party, or the music of a concert. The victory of Waterloo might have been organized in the ball-room at Brussels: and thus Rodney, at the table of Lord Sandwich, while the bottle was briskly circulating, being observed arranging bits of cork, and his solitary amusement having excited inquiry, said that he was practising a plan to annihilate an enemy's fleet. This proved to be that discovery of breaking the line, which the happy audacity of the hero afterwards executed. What situation is more common than a sea-voyage, where nothing presents itself to the reflections of most men than irksome observations on the desert of waters? But the constant exercise of the mind by habitual practice is the privilege of a commanding genius, and, in a similar situation, we discover Cicero and Sir William Jones acting alike. Amidst the Oriental seas, in a voyage of 12,000 miles, the mind of Jones kindled with delightful enthusiasm, and he has perpetuated those elevating feelings in his discourse to the Asiatic Society; so Cicero on board a ship, sailing slowly along the coast, passing by a town where his friend Trebatius resided, wrote a work which the other had expressed a wish to possess, and of which wish the view of the town had reminded him.

To this habit of continuity of attention, tracing the first simple idea to its remoter consequences, the philosophical genius owes many of its discoveries. It was one evening in the cathedral of Pisa that Galileo observed the vibrations of a brass lustre pendent from the vaulted roof, which had been left swinging by one of

Paris in 1730. They are remarkable as delineations of mental character in feature as strongly felt as if done under the direction of Lavater himself.—Ed.

the vergers. The habitual meditation of genius combined with an ordinary accident a new idea of science, and hence conceived the invention of measuring time by the medium of a pendulum. Who but a genius of this order, sitting in his orchard, and observing the descent of an apple, could have discovered a new quality in matter, and have ascertained the laws of attraction, by perceiving that the same causes might perpetuate the regular motions of the planetary system; who but a genius of this order, while viewing boys blowing soap-bladders, could have discovered the properties of light and colours, and then anatomised a ray? Franklin, on board a ship, observing a partial stillness in the waves when they threw down water which had been used for culinary purposes, by the same principles of meditation was led to the discovery of the wonderful property in oil of calming the agitated ocean; and many a ship has been preserved in tempestuous weather, or a landing facilitated on a dangerous surf, by this solitary meditation of genius.

Thus meditation draws out of the most simple truths the strictness of philosophical demonstration, converting even the amusements of school-boys, or the most ordinary domestic occurrences, into the principle of a new science. The phenomenon of galvanism was familiar to students; yet was there but one man of genius who could take advantage of an accident, give it his name, and fix it as a science. It was while lying in his bath, but still meditating on the means to detect the fraud of the goldsmith who had made Hiero's crown, that the most extraordinary philosopher of antiquity was led to the investigation of a series of propositions demonstrated in the two books of Archimedes, *De insidentibus in fluido*, still extant; and which a great mathematician admires both for the strictness and elegance of the demonstrations. To as minute a domestic occurrence

as Galvani's we owe the steam-engine. When the Marquis of Worcester was a State prisoner in the Tower, he one day observed, while his meal was preparing in his apartment, that the cover of the vessel being tight, was, by the expansion of the steam, suddenly forced off, and driven up the chimney. His inventive mind was led on in a train of thought with reference to the practical application of steam as a first mover. His observations, obscurely exhibited in his "Century of Inventions," were successively wrought out by the meditations of others, and an incident, to which one can hardly make a formal reference without a risible emotion, terminated in the noblest instance of mechanical power.

Into the stillness of meditation the mind of genius must be frequently thrown; it is a kind of darkness which hides from us all surrounding objects, even in the light of day. This is the first state of existence in genius. In Cicero's "Treatise on Old Age," we find Cato admiring Caius Sulpitius Gallus, who, when he sat down to write in the morning, was surprised by the evening; and when he took up his pen in the evening, was surprised by the appearance of the morning. Socrates sometimes remained a whole day in immovable meditation, his eyes and countenance directed to one spot, as if in the stillness of death. La Fontaine, when writing his comic tales, has been observed early in the morning and late in the evening in the same recumbent posture under the same tree. This quiescent state is a sort of enthusiasm, and renders everything that surrounds us as distant as if an immense interval separated us from the scene. Poggius has told us of Dante, that he indulged his meditations more strongly than any man he knew; for when deeply busied in reading, he seemed to live only in his ideas. Once the poet went to view a public procession; having entered a bookseller's shop, and taken up a book, he sunk into a reverie; on his return he de-

clared that he had neither seen nor heard a single occurrence in the public exhibition, which had passed unobserved before him. It has been told of a modern astronomer, that one summer night, when he was withdrawing to his chamber, the brightness of the heavens showed a phenomenon: he passed the whole night in observing it; and when they came to him early in the morning, and found him in the same attitude, he said, like one who had been recollecting his thoughts for a few moments, "It must be thus; but I'll go to bed before it is late." He had gazed the entire night in meditation, and was not aware of it. Abernethy has finely painted the situation of Newton in this state of mind. I will not change his words, for his words are his feelings. "It was this power of mind—which can contemplate the greatest number of facts or propositions with accuracy—that so eminently distinguished Newton from other men. It was this power that enabled him to arrange the whole of a treatise in his thoughts before he committed a single idea to paper. In the exercise of this power, he was known occasionally to have passed a whole night or day, entirely inattentive to surrounding objects."

There is nothing incredible in the stories related of some who have experienced this entranced state in study, where the mind, deliciously inebriated with the object it contemplates, feels nothing, from the excess of feeling, as a philosopher well describes it. The impressions from our exterior sensations are often suspended by great mental excitement. Archimedes, involved in the investigation of mathematical truth, and the painters Protogenes and Parmegiano, found their senses locked up as it were in meditation, so as to be incapable of withdrawing themselves from their work, even in the midst of the terrors and storming of the place by the enemy. Marino was so absorbed in the composition of his "Adonis,"

that he suffered his leg to be burned before the painful sensation grew stronger than the intellectual pleasure of his imagination. Monsieur Thomas, a modern French writer, and an intense thinker, would sit for hours against a hedge, composing with a low voice, taking the same pinch of snuff for half an hour together without being aware that it had long disappeared. When he quitted his apartment, after prolonging his studies there, a visible alteration was observed in his person, and the agitation of his recent thoughts was still traced in his air and manner. With eloquent truth Buffon described those reveries of the student, which compress his day, and mark the hours by the sensations of minutes! "Invention depends on patience: contemplate your subject long; it will gradually unfold till a sort of electric spark convulses for a moment the brain, and spreads down to the very heart a glow of irritation. Then come the luxuries of genius, the true hours for production and composition—hours so delightful, that I have spent twelve or fourteen successively at my writing-desk, and still been in a state of pleasure." Bishop Horne, whose literary feelings were of the most delicate and lively kind, has beautifully recorded them in his progress through a favourite and lengthened work—his Commentary on the Psalms. He alludes to himself in the third person; yet who but the self-painter could have caught those delicious emotions which are so evanescent in the deep occupation of pleasant studies? "He arose fresh in the morning to his task; the silence of the night invited him to pursue it; and he can truly say, that food and rest were not preferred before it. Every part improved infinitely upon his acquaintance with it, and no one gave him uneasiness but the last, for then he grieved that his work was done."

This eager delight of pursuing study, this impatience of interruption, and this exultation in progress, are alike

finely described by Milton in a letter to his friend Diodati.

"Such is the character of my mind, that no delay, none of the ordinary cessations for rest or otherwise, I had nearly said care or thinking of the very subject, can hold me back from being hurried on to the destined point, and from completing the great circuit, as it were, of the study in which I am engaged."

Such is the picture of genius viewed in the stillness of MEDITATION; but there is yet a more excited state, when, as if consciousness were mixing with its reveries, in the allusion of a scene, of a person, of a passion, the emotions of the soul affect even the organs of sense. This excitement is experienced when the poet in the excellence of invention, and the philosopher in the force of intellect, alike share in the hours of inspiration and the ENTHUSIASM of genius.

CHAPTER XII.

The enthusiasm of genius.—A state of mind resembling a waking dream distinct from reverie.—The ideal presence distinguished from the real presence.—The senses are really affected in the ideal world proved by a variety of instances.—Of the rapture or sensation of deep study in art, in science, and literature.—Of perturbed feelings in delirium.—In extreme endurance of attention.—And in visionary illusions.—Enthusiasts in literature and art—of their self-immolations.

WE left the man of genius in the stillness of meditation. We have now to pursue his history through that more excited state which occurs in the most active operations of genius, and which the term *reverie* inadequately indicates. Metaphysical distinctions but ill describe it, and popular language affords no terms for those

faculties and feelings which escape the observation of the multitude not affected by the phenomenon.

The illusion produced by a drama on persons of great sensibility, when all the senses are awakened by a mixture of reality with imagination, is the effect experienced by men of genius in their own vivified ideal world. Real emotions are raised by fiction. In a scene, apparently passing in their presence, where the whole train of circumstances succeeds in all the continuity of nature, and where a sort of real existences appear to rise up before them, they themselves become spectators or actors. Their sympathies are excited, and the exterior organs of sense are visibly affected—they even break out into speech, and often accompany their speech with gestures.

In this equivocal state the enthusiast of genius produces his masterpieces. This waking dream is distinct from reverie, where, our thoughts wandering without connexion, the faint impressions are so evanescent as to occur without even being recollected. A day of *reverie* is beautifully painted by Rousseau as distinct from a day of *thinking:* "J'ai des journées délicieuses, errant sans souci, sans projet, sans affaire, de bois en bois, et de rocher en rocher, *rêvant toujours et ne pensant point.*" Far different, however, is one closely-pursued act of meditation, carrying the enthusiast of genius beyond the precinct of actual existence. The act of contemplation then creates the thing contemplated. He is now the busy actor in a world which he himself only views; alone, he hears, he sees, he touches, he laughs, he weeps; his brows and lips, and his very limbs move.

Poets and even painters, who, as Lord Bacon describes witches, "are imaginative," have often involuntarily betrayed, in the act of composition, those gestures which accompany this enthusiasm. Witness Domenichino enraging himself that he might portray anger. Nor were

these creative gestures quite unknown to Quintilian, who has nobly compared them to the lashings of the lion's tail, rousing him to combat. Actors of genius have accustomed themselves to walk on the stage for an hour before the curtain was drawn, that they might fill their minds with all the phantoms of the drama, and so suspend all communion with the external world. The great actress of our age, during representation, always had the door of her dressing-room open, that she might listen to, and if possible watch the whole performance, with the same attention as was experienced by the spectators. By this means she possessed herself of all the illusion of the scene; and when she herself entered on the stage, her dreaming thoughts then brightened into a vision, where the perceptions of the soul were as firm and clear as if she were really the Constance or the Katherine whom she only represented.*

Aware of this peculiar faculty, so prevalent in the more vivid exercise of genius, Lord Kaimes seems to have been the first who, in a work on criticism, attempted to name *the ideal presence*, to distinguish it from the *real presence* of things. It has been called the representative faculty, the imaginative state, and many other states and faculties. Call it what we will, no term opens to us the invisible mode of its operations, no metaphysical definition expresses its variable nature. Conscious of the existence of such a faculty, our critic perceived that the conception of it is by no means clear when described in words.

Has not the difference between an actual thing, and its image in a glass, perplexed some philosophers? and it is well known how far the ideal philosophy has been carried by so fine a genius as Bishop Berkeley. "All are pictures, alike painted on the retina, or optical sen-

* The late Mrs. Siddons. She herself communicated this striking circumstance to me.

sorium!" exclaimed the enthusiast Barry, who only saw pictures in nature, and nature in pictures. This faculty has had a strange influence over the passionate lovers of statues. We find unquestionable evidence of the vividness of the representative faculty, or the ideal presence, vying with that of reality. Evelyn has described one of this cast of mind, in the librarian of the Vatican, who haunted one of the finest collections at Rome. To these statues he would frequently talk as if they were living persons, often kissing and embracing them. A similar circumstance might be recorded of a man of distinguished talent and literature among ourselves. Wondrous stories are told of the amatorial passion for marble statues; but the wonder ceases, and the truth is established, when the irresistible ideal presence is comprehended; the visions which now bless these lovers of statues, in the modern land of sculpture, Italy, had acted with equal force in ancient Greece. "The Last Judgment," the stupendous ideal presence of Michael Angelo, seems to have communicated itself to some of his beholders: "As I stood before this picture," a late traveller tells us, "my blood chilled as if the reality were before me, and the very sound of the trumpet seemed to pierce my ears."

Cold and barren tempers without imagination, whose impressions of objects never rise beyond those of memory and reflection, which know only to compare, and not to excite, will smile at this equivocal state of the ideal presence; yet it is a real one to the enthusiast of genius, and it is his happiest and peculiar condition. Destitute of this faculty, no metaphysical aid, no art to be taught him, no mastery of talent, will avail him: unblest with it, the votary will find each sacrifice lying cold on the altar, for no accepting flame from heaven shall kindle it.

This enthusiasm indeed can only be discovered by men of genius themselves; yet when most under its influence,

they can least perceive it, as the eye which sees all things cannot view itself; or, rather, such an attempt would be like searching for the principle of life, which were it found would cease to be life. From an enchanted man we must not expect a narrative of his enchantment; for if he could speak to us reasonably, and like one of ourselves, in that case he would be a man in a state of disenchantment, and then would perhaps yield us no better account than we may trace by our own observations.

There is, however, something of reality in this state of the ideal presence; for the most familiar instances will show how the nerves of each external sense are put in motion by the idea of the object, as if the real object had been presented to it. The difference is only in the degree. The senses are more concerned in the ideal world than at first appears. The idea of a thing will make us shudder; and the bare imagination of it will often produce a real pain. A curious consequence may be deduced from this principle; Milton, lingering amid the freshness of nature in Eden, felt all the delights of those elements which he was creating; his nerves moved with the images which excited them. The fierce and wild Dante, amidst the abysses of his "Inferno," must often have been startled by its horrors, and often left his bitter and gloomy spirit in the stings he inflicted on the great criminal. The moveable nerves, then, of the man of genius are a reality; he sees, he hears, he feels, by each. How mysterious to us is the operation of this faculty!

A Homer and a Richardson,* like nature, open a volume large as life itself—embracing a circuit of human existence! This state of the mind has even a reality in

* Richardson assembles a family about him, writing down what they said, seeing their very manner of saying, living with them as often and as long as he wills—with such a personal unity, that an ingenious lawyer once told me that he required no stronger evidence of a fact in any court of law than a circumstantial scene in Richardson.

it for the generality of persons. In a romance or a drama, tears are often seen in the eyes of the reader or the spectator, who, before they have time to recollect that the whole is fictitious, have been surprised for a moment by a strong conception of a present and existing scene.

Can we doubt of the reality of this faculty, when the visible and outward frame of the man of genius bears witness to its presence? When Fielding said, "I do not doubt but the most pathetic and affecting scenes have been writ with tears," he probably drew that discovery from an inverse feeling to his own. Fielding would have been gratified to have confirmed the observation by facts which never reached him. Metastasio, in writing the ninth scene of the second act of his *Olympiad*, found himself suddenly moved—shedding tears. The imagined sorrows had inspired real tears; and they afterwards proved contagious. Had our poet not perpetuated his surprise by an interesting sonnet, the circumstance had passed away with the emotion, as many such have. Pope could never read Priam's speech for the loss of his son without tears, and frequently has been observed to weep over tender and melancholy passages. Alfieri, the most energetic poet of modern times, having composed, without a pause, the whole of an act, noted in the margin—"Written under a paroxysm of enthusiasm, and while shedding a flood of tears." The impressions which the frame experiences in this state, leave deeper traces behind them than those of reverie. A circumstance accidentally preserved has informed us of the tremors of Dryden after having written that ode,* which, as he confessed, he had pursued without the power of quitting it; but these tremors were not unusual with him—for in the preface to his

* This famous and unparalleled ode was probably afterwards retouched; but Joseph Warton discovered in it the rapidity of the thoughts, and the glow and the expressiveness of the images; which are the certain marks of the *first sketch* of a master.

"Tales," he tell us, that "in translating Homer he found greater pleasure than in Virgil; but it was not a pleasure without pain; the continual agitation of the spirits must needs be a weakener to any constitution, especially in age, and many pauses are required for refreshment betwixt the heats."

We find Metastasio, like others of the brotherhood, susceptible of this state, complaining of his sufferings during the poetical æstus. "When I apply with attention, the nerves of my sensorium are put into a violent tumult; I grow as red as a drunkard, and am obliged to quit my work." When Buffon was absorbed on a subject which presented great objections to his opinions, he felt his head burn, and saw his countenance flushed; and this was a warning for him to suspend his attention. Gray could never compose voluntarily: his genius resembled the armed apparition in Shakspeare's master-tragedy. "He would not be commanded." When he wished to compose the Installation Ode, for a considerable time he felt himself without the power to begin it: a friend calling on him, Gray flung open his door hastily, and in a hurried voice and tone, exclaiming in the first verse of that ode—

Hence, avaunt! 'tis holy ground!—

his friend started at the disordered appearance of the bard, whose orgasm had disturbed his very air and countenance.

Listen to one labouring with all the magic of the spell. Madame Roland has thus powerfully described the ideal presence in her first readings of Telemachus and Tasso:—"My respiration rose, I felt a rapid fire colouring my face, and my voice changing had betrayed my agitation. I was Eucharis for Telemachus, and Erminia for Tancred. However, during this perfect transformation, I did not yet think that I myself was anything, for any one: the

whole had no connexion with myself. I sought for nothing around me; I was they; I saw only the objects which existed for them; it was a dream, without being awakened."

The description which so calm and exquisite an investigator of taste and philosophy as our sweet and polished Reynolds has given of himself at one of these moments, is too rare not to be recorded in his own words. Alluding to the famous "Transfiguration," our own Raffaelle says—"When I have stood looking at that picture from figure to figure, the eagerness, the spirit, the close unaffected attention of each figure to the principal action, my thoughts have carried me away, that I have forgot myself; and for that time might be looked upon as an enthusiastic madman; for I could really fancy the whole action was passing before my eyes."

The effect which the study of Plutarch's Illustrious Men produced on the mighty mind of Alfieri, during a whole winter, while he lived as it were among the heroes of antiquity, he has himself described. Alfieri wept and raved with grief and indignation that he was born under a government which favoured no Roman heroes and sages. As often as he was struck with the great deeds of these great men, in his extreme agitation he rose from his seat as one possessed. The feeling of genius in Alfieri was suppressed for more than twenty years, by the discouragement of his uncle: but as the natural temperament cannot be crushed out of the soul of genius, he was a poet without writing a single verse; and as a great poet, the ideal presence at times became ungovernable, verging to madness. In traversing the wilds of Arragon, his emotions would certainly have given birth to poetry, could he have expressed himself in verse. It was a complete state of the imaginative existence, or this ideal presence; for he proceeded along the wilds of Arragon in a reverie, weeping and laughing by turns.

He considered this as a folly, because it ended in nothing but in laughter and tears. He was not aware that he was then yielding to a demonstration, could he have judged of himself, that he possessed those dispositions of mind and that energy of passion which form the poetical character.

Genius creates by a single conception; the statuary conceives the statue at once, which he afterwards executes by the slow process of art; and the architect contrives a whole palace in an instant. In a single principle, opening as it were on a sudden to genius, a great and new system of things is discovered. It has happened, sometimes, that this single conception, rushing over the whole concentrated spirit, has agitated the frame convulsively. It comes like a whispered secret from Nature. When Malebranche first took up Descartes's Treatise on Man, the germ of his own subsequent philosophic system, such was his intense feeling, that a violent palpitation of the heart, more than once, obliged him to lay down the volume. When the first idea of the "Essay on the Arts and Sciences" rushed on the mind of Rousseau, a feverish symptom in his nervous system approached to a slight delirium. Stopping under an oak, he wrote with a pencil the Prosopopeia of Fabricius. "I still remember my solitary transport at the discovery of a philosophical argument against the doctrine of transubstantiation," exclaimed Gibbon in his Memoirs.

This quick sensibility of genius has suppressed the voice of poets in reciting their most pathetic passages. Thomson was so oppressed by a passage in Virgil or Milton when he attempted to read, that "his voice sunk in ill-articulated sounds from the bottom of his breast." The tremulous figures of the ancient Sibyl appear to have been viewed in the land of the Muses, by the energetic description which Paulus Jovius gives us of the impetus and afflatus of one of the Italian improvvisatori,

some of whom, I have heard from one present at a similar exhibition, have not degenerated in poetic inspiration, nor in its corporeal excitement. "His eyes fixed downwards, kindle as he gives utterance to his effusions, the moist drops flow down his cheeks, the veins of his forehead swell, and wonderfully his learned ear, as it were, abstracted and intent, moderates each impulse of his flowing numbers."*

This enthusiasm throws the man of genius amid Nature into absorbing reveries when the senses of other men are overcome at the appearance of destruction; he continues to view only Nature herself. The mind of Pliny, to add one more chapter to his mighty scroll, sought Nature amidst the volcano in which he perished. Vernet was on board a ship in a raging tempest where all hope was given up. The astonished captain beheld the artist of genius, his pencil in his hand, in calm enthusiasm sketching the terrible world of waters—studying the wave that was rising to devour him.†

There is a tender enthusiasm in the elevated studies of antiquity. Then the ideal presence or the imaginative existence prevails, by its perpetual associations, or as the late Dr. Brown has, perhaps, more distinctly termed them, *suggestions*. "In contemplating antiquity, the mind itself becomes antique," was finely observed by Livy, long ere our philosophy of the mind existed as a system. This rapture, or sensation of deep study, has been described by one whose imagination had strayed into the occult learning of antiquity, and in the hymns of Or-

* The passage is curious:—Canenti defixi exardent oculi, sudores manant, frontis venæ contumescunt, et quod mirum est, eruditæ aures, tanquam alienæ et intentæ, omnem impetum profluentium numerorum exactissimâ ratione moderantur."

† Vernet was the artist whose sea-ports of France still decorate the Louvre. He was marine painter to Louis XV. and grandfather of the celebrated Horace Vernet, whose recent death has deprived France of her best painter of battle-scenes.—Ed.

pheus it seemed to him that he had lifted the veil from Nature. His feelings were associated with her loneliness. I translate his words:—"When I took these dark mystical hymns into my hands, I appeared as it were to be descending into an abyss of the mysteries of venerable antiquity; at that moment, the world in silence and the stars and moon only, watching me." This enthusiasm is confirmed by Mr. Mathias, who applies this description to his own emotions on his first opening the manuscript volumes of the poet Gray on the philosophy of Plato; "and many a learned man," he adds, "will acknowledge as his own the feelings of this animated scholar."

Amidst the monuments of great and departed nations, our imagination is touched by the grandeur of local impressions, and the vivid associations, or suggestions, of the manners, the arts, and the individuals, of a great people. The classical author of Anacharsis, when in Italy, would often stop as if overcome by his recollections. Amid camps, temples, circuses, hippodromes, and public and private edifices, he, as it were, held an interior converse with the manes of those who seemed hovering about the capital of the old world; as if he had been a citizen of ancient Rome travelling in the modern. So men of genius have roved amid the awful ruins till the ideal presence has fondly built up the city anew, and have become Romans in the Rome of two thousand years past. Pomponius Lætus, who devoted his life to this study, was constantly seen wandering amidst the vestiges of this "throne of the world." There, in many a reverie, as his eyes rested on the mutilated arch and the broken column, abstracted and immovable, he dropped tears in the ideal presence of Rome and of the Romans.* Another enthusiast of this class was Bosius,

* Shelley caught much of his poetry in wandering among the ruins of the palace of the Cæsars on the Palatine Hill; and the impression

who sought beneath Rome for another Rome, in those catacombs built by the early Christians for their asylum and their sepulchre. His work of "Roma Sotteranea" is the production of a subterraneous life, passed in fervent and perilous labours. Taking with him a hermit's meal for the week, this new Pliny often descended into the bowels of the earth, by lamp-light, clearing away the sand and ruins till a tomb broke forth, or an inscription became legible. Accompanied by some friend whom his enthusiasm had inspired with his own sympathy, here he dictated his notes, tracing the mouldering sculpture, and catching the fading picture. Thrown back into the primitive ages of Christianity, amid the local impressions, the historian of the Christian catacombs collected the memorials of an age and of a race which were hidden beneath the earth.*

The same enthusiasm surrounds the world of science with that creative imagination which has startled even men of science by its peculiar discoveries. Werner, the mineralogist, celebrated for his lectures, appears, by some accounts transmitted by his auditors, to have exercised this faculty. Werner often said that "he always depended on the muse for inspiration." His unwritten lecture was a reverie—till kindling in his progress, blending science and imagination in the grandeur of his conceptions, at times, as if he had gathered about him the very elements of nature, his spirit seemed to be hovering over the waters and the strata. With the same enthusiasm of science, Cuvier meditated on some bones, and some

made by historic ruins on the mind of Byron is powerfully evinced in his "Childe Harold."—Ed.

* A large number of these important memorials have been since removed to the *Galleria Lapidaria* of the Vatican, and arranged on the walls by Marini. They are invaluable as mementoes of the early Church at Rome. Aringhi has also devoted a work to their elucidation. The Rev. C. Maitland's "Church in the Catacombs" in an able general summary, clearly displaying their intrinsic historic value.—Ed.

fragments of bones, which could not belong to any known class of the animal kingdom. The philosopher dwelt on these animal ruins till he constructed numerous species which had disappeared from the globe. This sublime naturalist has ascertained and classified the fossil remains of animals whose existence can no longer be traced in the records of mankind. His own language bears testimony to the imagination which carried him on through a career so strange and wonderful. "It is a rational object of ambition in the mind of man, to whom only a short space of time is allotted upon earth, to have the glory of restoring the history of *thousands of ages which preceded the existence of his race, and of thousands of animals that never were contemporaneous with his species.*" Philosophy becomes poetry, and science imagination, in the enthusiasm of genius. Even in the practical part of a science, painful to the operator himself, Mr. Abernethy has declared, and eloquently declared, that this enthusiasm is absolutely requisite. "We have need of enthusiasm, or some strong incentive, to induce us to spend our nights in study, and our days in the disgusting and health-destroying observation of human diseases, which alone can enable us to understand, alleviate, or remove them. On no other terms can we be considered as real students of our profession—to confer that which sick kings would fondly purchase with their diadem—that which wealth cannot purchase, nor state nor rank bestow—to alleviate the most insupportable of human afflictions." Such is the enthusiasm of the physiologist of genius, who elevates the demonstrations of anatomical inquiries by the cultivation of the intellectual faculties, connecting "man with the common Master of the universe."

This enthusiasm inconceivably fills the mind of genius in all great and solemn operations. It is an agitation amidst calmness, and is required not only in the fine arts,

but wherever a great and continued exertion of the soul must be employed. The great ancients, who, if they were not always philosophers, were always men of genius, saw, or imagined they saw, a divinity within the man. This enthusiasm is alike experienced in the silence of study and amidst the roar of cannon, in painting a picture or in scaling a rampart. View De Thou, the historian, after his morning prayers, imploring the Divinity to purify his heart from partiality and hatred, and to open his spirit in developing the truth, amidst the contending factions of his times; and Haydn, employed in his "Creation," earnestly addressing the Creator ere he struck his instrument. In moments like these, man becomes a perfect unity—one thought and one act, abstracted from all other thoughts and all other acts. This intensity of the mind was felt by Gray in his loftiest excursions, and is perhaps the same power which impels the villager, when, to overcome his rivals in a contest for leaping, he retires back some steps, collects all exertion into his mind, and clears the eventful bound. One of our admirals in the reign of Elizabeth held as a maxim, that a height of passion, amounting to frenzy, was necessary to qualify a man for the command of a fleet; and Nelson, decorated by all his honours about him, on the day of battle, at the sight of those emblems of glory emulated himself. This enthusiasm was necessary for his genius, and made it effective.

But this enthusiasm, prolonged as it often has been by the operation of the imaginative existence, becomes a state of perturbed feeling, and can only be distinguished from a disordered intellect by the power of volition possessed by a sound mind of withdrawing from the ideal world into the world of sense. It is but a step which may carry us from the wanderings of fancy into the aberrations of delirium. The endurance of attention, even in minds of the highest order, is limited by a law of nature; and when thinking is goaded on to exhaustion, confusion

of ideas ensues, as straining any one of our limbs by excessive exertion produces tremor and torpor.

> With curious art the brain too finely wrought,
> Preys on herself and is destroyed by Thought;
> Constant attention wears the active mind,
> Blots out her powers, and leaves a blank behind—
> The greatest genius to this fate may bow.

Even minds less susceptible than high genius may become overpowered by their imagination. Often, in the deep silence around us, we seek to relieve ourselves by some voluntary noise or action which may direct our attention to an exterior object, and bring us back to the world, which we had, as it were, left behind us. The circumstance is sufficiently familiar; as well as another; that whenever we are absorbed in profound contemplation, a startling noise scatters the spirits, and painfully agitates the whole frame. The nerves are then in a state of the utmost relaxation. There may be an agony in thought which only deep thinkers experience. The terrible effect of metaphysical studies on Beattie has been told by himself. "Since the 'Essay on Truth' was printed in quarto, I have never *dared* to read it over. I durst not even read the sheets to see whether there were any errors in the print, and was obliged to get a friend to do that office for me. These studies came in time to have dreadful effects upon my nervous system; and I cannot read what I then wrote without some degree of horror, because it recalls to my mind the horrors that I have sometimes felt after passing a long evening in those severe studies."

Goldoni, after a rash exertion of writing sixteen plays in a year, confesses he paid the penalty of the folly. He flew to Genoa, leading a life of delicious vacuity. To pass the day without doing anything, was all the enjoyment he was now capable of feeling. But long after he said, "I felt at that time, and have ever since continued

to feel, the consequences of that exhaustion of spirits I sustained in composing my sixteen comedies."

The enthusiasm of study was experienced by Pope in his self-education, and once it clouded over his fine intellect. It was the severity of his application which distorted his body; and he then partook of a calamity incidental to the family of genius, for he sunk into that state of exhaustion which Smollett experienced during half a year, called a *coma vigil*, an affection of the brain, where the principle of life is so reduced, that all external objects appear to be passing in a dream. Boerhaave has related of himself, that having imprudently indulged in intense thought on a particular subject, he did not close his eyes for six weeks after; and Tissot, in his work on the health of men of letters, abounds in similar cases, where a complete stupor has affected the unhappy student for a period of six months.

Assuredly the finest geniuses have not always the power to withdraw themselves from that intensely interesting train of ideas, which we have shown has not been removed from about them by even the violent stimuli of exterior objects; and the scenical illusion which then occurs, has been called the *hallucinatio studiosa*, or false ideas in reverie. Such was the state in which Petrarch found himself, in that minute narrative of a vision in which Laura appeared to him; and Tasso, in the lofty conversations he held with a spirit that glided towards him on the beams of the sun. In this state was Malebranche listening to the voice of God within him; and Lord Herbert, when, to know whether he should publish his book, he threw himself on his knees, and interrogated the Deity in the stillness of the sky.* And thus Pascal

* In his curious autobiography he has given the prayer he used, ending, "I am not satisfied whether I shall publish this book *de veritate;* if it be for thy glory, I beseech thee give me some sign from heaven; if not I shall suppress it." His lordship adds, "I had no sooner spoken

started at times at a fiery gulf opening by his side. Spinello having painted the fall of the rebellious angels, had so strongly imagined the illusion, and more particularly the terrible features of Lucifer, that he was himself struck with such horror as to have been long afflicted with the presence of the demon to which his genius had given birth. The influence of the same ideal presence operated on the religious painter Angeloni, who could never represent the sufferings of Jesus without his eyes overflowing with tears. Descartes, when young, and in a country seclusion, his brain exhausted with meditation, and his imagination heated to excess, heard a voice in the air which called him to pursue the search of truth; nor did he doubt the vision, and this delirious dreaming of genius charmed him even in his after-studies. Our Collins and Cowper were often thrown into that extraordinary state of mind, when the ideal presence converts us into visionaries; and their illusions were as strong as Swedenborg's, who saw a terrestrial heaven in the glittering streets of his New Jerusalem; or Jacob Behmen's, who listened to a celestial voice till he beheld the apparition of an angel; or Cardan's, when he so carefully observed a number of little armed men at his feet; or Benvenuto Cellini's, whose vivid imagination and glorious egotism so frequently contemplated "a resplendent light hovering over his shadow."

Such minds identified themselves with their visions! If we pass them over by asserting that they were insane, we are only cutting the knot which we cannot untie. We

these words but a loud, though gentle noise came from the heavens (for it was like nothing on earth) which did so comfort and cheer me, that I took my petition as granted, and that I had the sign I demanded, whereupon also I resolved to print my book. This (how strange soever it may seem) I protest before the eternal God is true, neither am I any way superstitiously deceived therein, since I did not only clearly hear the noise, but in the serenest sky that ever I saw, being without all cloud, did to my thinking see the place from whence it came."—Ed.

have no right to deny what some maintain, that a sympathy of the corporeal with the incorporeal nature of man, his imaginative with his physical existence, is an excitement which appears to have been experienced by persons of a peculiar organization, and which metaphysicians in despair must resign to the speculations of enthusiasts themselves, though metaphysicians reason about phenomena far removed from the perceptions of the eye. The historian of the mind cannot omit this fact, unquestionable, however incomprehensible. According to our own conceptions, this state must produce a strange mysterious personage: a concentration of a human being within himself, endowed with inward eyes, ears which listen to interior sounds, and invisible hands touching impalpable objects, for whatever they act or however they are acted on, as far as respects themselves all must have passed within their own minds. The Platonic Dr. More flattered himself that he was an enthusiast without enthusiasm, which seems but a suspicious state of convalescence. "I must ingenuously confess," he says, "that I have a natural touch of enthusiasm in my complexion, but such as I thank God was ever governable enough, and have found at length perfectly subduable. In virtue of which victory I know better what is in enthusiasts than they themselves; and therefore was able to write with life and judgment, and shall, I hope, contribute not a little to the peace and quiet of this kingdom thereby." Thus far one of its votaries: and all that he vaunts to have acquired by this mysterious faculty of enthusiasm is the having rendered it "at length perfectly subduable." Yet those who have written on "Mystical devotion," have declared that, "it is a sublime state of mind to which whole sects have aspired, and some individuals appear to have attained."* The histories of

* Charles Butler has drawn up a sensible essay on "Mystical Devotion." He was a Roman Catholic. Norris, and Dr. Henry More, and Bishop Berkeley, may be consulted by the curious.

great visionaries, were they correctly detailed, would probably prove how their delusions consisted of the ocular *spectra* of their brain and the accelerated sensations of their nerves. Bayle has conjured up an amusing theory of apparitions, to show that Hobbes, who was subject to occasional terrors, might fear that a certain combination of atoms agitating his brain might so disorder his mind as to expose him to spectral visions; and so being very timid, and distrusting his own imagination, he was averse at times to be left alone. Apparitions often happen in dreams, but they may happen to a man when awake, for reading and hearing of them would revive their images, and these images might play even an incredulous philosopher some unlucky trick.

But men of genius whose enthusiasm has not been past recovery, have experienced this extraordinary state of the mind, in those exhaustions of study to which they unquestionably are subject. Tissot, on "The Health of Men of Letters," has produced a terrifying number of cases. They see and hear what none but themselves do. Genius thrown into this peculiar state has produced some noble effusions. Kotzebue was once absorbed in hypochondriacal melancholy, and appears to have meditated on self-destruction; but it happened that he preserved his habit of dramatic composition, and produced one of his most energetic dramas—that of "Misanthropy and Repentance." He tells us that he had never experienced such a rapid flow of thoughts and images, and he believed, what a physiological history would perhaps show, that there are some maladies, those of the brain and the nerves, which actually stretch the powers of the mind beyond their usual reach. It is the more vivid world of ideal existence.

But what is more evident, men of the finest genius have experienced these hallucinations in society acting on their moral habits. They have insulated the mind. With

them ideas have become realities, and suspicions certainties; while events have been noted down as seen and heard, which in truth had never occurred. Rousseau's phantoms scarcely ever quitted him for a day. Barry imagined that he was invisibly persecuted by the Royal Academy, who had even spirited up a gang of housebreakers. The vivid memoirs of Alfieri will authenticate what Donne, who himself had suffered from them, calls "these eclipses, sudden offuscations and darkening of the senses." Too often the man of genius, with a vast and solitary power, darkens the scene of life; he builds a pyramid between himself and the sun. Mocking at the expedients by which society has contrived to protect its feebleness, he would break down the institution from which he has shrunk away in the loneliness of his feelings. Such is the insulating intellect in which some of the most elevated spirits have been reduced. To imbue ourselves with the genius of their works, even to think of them, is an awful thing! In nature their existence is a solecism, as their genius is a paradox; for their crimes seem to be without guilt, their curses have kindness in them, and if they afflict mankind it is in sorrow.

Yet what less than enthusiasm is the purchase-price of high passion and invention? Perhaps never has there been a man of genius of this rare cast, who has not betrayed the ebullitions of imagination in some outward action, at that period when the illusions of life are more real to genius than its realities. There is a *fata morgana*, that throws into the air a pictured land, and the deceived eye trusts till the visionary shadows glide away. "I have dreamt of a golden land," exclaimed Fuseli, "and solicit in vain for the barge which is to carry me to its shore." A slight derangement of our accustomed habits, a little perturbation of the faculties, and a romantic tinge on the feelings, give no indifferent promise of genius; of that generous temper which knowing nothing

of the baseness of mankind, with indefinite views carries on some glorious design to charm the world or to make it happier. Often we hear, from the confessions of men of genius, of their having in youth indulged the most elevating and the most chimerical projects; and if age ridicule thy imaginative existence, be assured that it is the decline of its genius. That virtuous and tender enthusiast, Fénélon, in his early youth, troubled his friends with a classical and religious reverie. He was on the point of quitting them to restore the independence of Greece, with the piety of a missionary, and with the taste of a classical antiquary. The Peloponnesus opened to him the Church of Corinth, where St. Paul preached, the Piræus where Socrates conversed; while the latent poet was to pluck laurels from Delphi, and rove amidst the amenities of Tempe. Such was the influence of the ideal presence; and barren will be his imagination, and luckless his fortune, who, claiming the honours of genius, has never been touched by such a temporary delirium.

To this enthusiasm, and to this alone, can we attribute the self-immolation of men of genius. Mighty and laborious works have been pursued as a forlorn hope, at the certain destruction of the fortune of the individual. Vast labours attest the enthusiasm which accompanied their progress. Such men have sealed their works with their blood: they have silently borne the pangs of disease; they have barred themselves from the pursuits of fortune; they have torn themselves away from all they loved in life, patiently suffering these self-denials, to escape from interruptions and impediments to their studies. Martyrs of literature and art, they behold in their solitude the halo of immortality over their studious heads—that fame which is "a life beyond life." Van Helmont, in his library and in his laboratory, preferred their busy solitude to the honours and the invitations of Rodolphus II., there writing down what he daily experienced during

thirty years; nor would the enthusiast yield up to the emperor one of those golden and visionary days! Milton would not desist from proceeding with one of his works, although warned by the physician of the certain loss of his sight. He declared he preferred his duty to his eyes, and doubtless his fame to his comfort. Anthony Wood, to preserve the lives of others, voluntarily resigned his own to cloistered studies; nor did the literary passion desert him in his last moments, when with his dying hands the hermit of literature still grasped his beloved papers, and his last mortal thoughts dwelt on his "Athenæ Oxonienses." Moreri, the founder of our great biographical collections conceived the design with such enthusiasm, and found such seduction in the labour, that he willingly withdrew from the popular celebrity he had acquired as a preacher, and the preferment which a minister of state, in whose house he resided, would have opened to his views.* After the first edition of his "Historical Dictionary," he had nothing so much at heart as its improvement. His unyielding application was converting labour into death; but collecting his last renovated vigour, with his dying hands he gave the volume to the world, though he did not live to witness even its publication. All objects in life appeared mean to him, compared with that exalted delight of addressing, to the literary men of his age, the history of their brothers. Such are the men, as Bacon says of himself, who are "the servants of posterity,"

> Who scorn delights, and live laborious days!

The same enthusiasm inspires the pupils of art consumed by their own ardour. The young and classical

* Louis Moreri was born in Provence in 1643, and died in 1680, at the early age of 37, while engaged on a second edition of his great work. The minister alluded to in the text was M. de Pomponne, Secretary of State to Louis XIV. until the year 1679.—Ed.

sculptor who raised the statue of Charles II., placed in the centre of the Royal Exchange, was, in the midst of his work, advised by his medical friends to desist; for the energy of his labour, with the strong excitement of his feelings, already had made fatal inroads in his constitution: but he was willing, he said, to die at the foot of his statue. The statue was raised, and the young sculptor, with the shining eye and hectic flush of consumption, beheld it there—returned home—and died. Drouais, a pupil of David, the French painter, was a youth of fortune, but the solitary pleasure of his youth was his devotion to Raphael; he was at his studies from four in the morning till night. "Painting or nothing!" was the cry of this enthusiast of elegance; "First fame, then amusement," was another. His sensibility was great as his enthusiasm; and he cut in pieces the picture for which David declared he would inevitably obtain the prize. "I have had my reward in your approbation; but next year I shall feel more certain of deserving it," was the reply of this young enthusiast. Afterwards he astonished Paris with his "Marius;" but while engaged on a subject which he could never quit, the principle of life itself was drying up in his veins. Henry Headley and Kirke White were the early victims of the enthusiasm of study, and are mourned by the few who are organized like themselves.

'Twas thine own genius gave the final blow,
And help'd to plant the wound that laid thee low;
So the struck eagle, stretch'd upon the plain,
No more through rolling clouds to soar again,
View'd his own feather on the fatal dart,
And wing'd the shaft that quiver'd in his heart;
Keen were his pangs, but keener far to feel
He nursed the pinion which impell'd the steel,
While the same plumage that had warm'd his nest,
Drank the last life-drop of his bleeding breast.

One of our former great students, when reduced in health

by excessive study, was entreated to abandon it, and in the scholastic language of the day, not to *perdere substantiam propter accidentia.* With a smile the martyr of study repeated a verse from Juvenal:

> Nec propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.
> No! not for life lose that for which I live!

Thus the shadow of death falls among those who are existing with more than life about them. Yet "there is no celebrity for the artist," said Gesner, "if the love of his own art do not become a vehement passion; if the hours he employs to cultivate it be not for him the most delicious ones of his life; if study become not his true existence and his first happiness; if the society of his brothers in art be not that which most pleases him; if even in the night-time the ideas of his art do not occupy his vigils or his dreams; if in the morning he fly not to his work, impatient to recommence what he left unfinished. These are the marks of him who labours for true glory and posterity; but if he seek only to please the taste of his age, his works will not kindle the desires nor touch the hearts of those who love the arts and the artists."

Unaccompanied by enthusiasm, genius will produce nothing but uninteresting works of art; not a work of art resembling the dove of Archytas, which beautiful piece of mechanism, while other artists beheld flying, no one could frame such another dove to meet it in the air. Enthusiasm is that secret and harmonious spirit which hovers over the production of genius, throwing the reader of a book, or the spectator of a statue, into the very ideal presence whence these works have really originated. A great work always leaves us in a state of musing.

CHAPTER XIII.

Of the jealousy of Genius.—Jealousy often proportioned to the degree of genius.—A perpetual fever among Authors and Artists.—Instances of its incredible excess among brothers and benefactors.—Of a peculiar species, where the fever consumes the sufferer, without its malignancy.

JEALOUSY, long supposed to be the offspring of little minds, is not, however, confined to them. In the literary republic, the passion fiercely rages among the senators as well as among the people. In that curious self-description which Linnæus comprised in a single page, written with the precision of a naturalist, that great man discovered that his constitution was liable to be afflicted with jealousy. Literary jealousy seems often proportioned to the degree of genius, and the shadowy and equivocal claims of literary honour is the real cause of this terrible fear; for in cases where the object is more palpable and definite than intellectual excellence, jealousy does not appear so strongly to affect the claimant for admiration. The most beautiful woman, in the season of beauty, is more haughty than jealous; she rarely encounters a rival; and while her claims exist, who can contend with a fine feature or a dissolving glance? But a man of genius has no other existence than in the opinion of the world; a divided empire would obscure him, and a contested one might prove his annihilation.

The lives of authors and artists exhibit a most painful disease in that jealousy which is the perpetual fever of their existence. Why does Plato never mention Xenophon, and why does Xenophon inveigh against Plato, studiously collecting every little rumour which may detract from his fame? They wrote on the same subject!

The studied affectation of Aristotle to differ from the doctrines of his master Plato while he was following them, led him into ambiguities and contradictions which have been remarked. The two fathers of our poetry, Chaucer and Gower, suffered their friendship to be interrupted towards the close of their lives. Chaucer bitterly reflects on his friend for the indelicacy of some of his tales: "Of all such *cursed stories* I say fy!" and Gower, evidently in return, erased those verses in praise of his friend which he had inserted in the first copy of his "Confessio Amantis." Why did Corneille, tottering to the grave, when Racine consulted him on his first tragedy, advise the author never to write another? Why does Voltaire continually detract from the sublimity of Corneille, the sweetness of Racine, and the fire of Crébillon? Why did Dryden never speak of Otway with kindness but when in his grave, then acknowledging that Otway excelled him in the pathetic? Why did Leibnitz speak slightingly of Locke's Essay, and meditate on nothing less than the complete overthrow of Newton's system? Why, when Boccaccio sent to Petrarch a copy of Dante, declaring that the work was like a first light which had illuminated his mind, did Petrarch boldly observe that he had not been anxious to inquire after it, for intending himself to compose it in the vernacular idiom, he had no wish to be considered as a plagiary? and he only allows Dante's superiority from having written in the vulgar idiom, which he did not consider an enviable merit. Thus frigidly Petrarch could behold the solitary Ætna before him, in the "Inferno," while he shrunk into himself with the painful consciousness of the existence of another poet, obscuring his own majesty. It is curious to observe Lord Shaftesbury treating with the most acrimonious contempt the great writers of his own times—Cowley, Dryden, Addison, and Prior. We cannot imagine that his lordship was so entirely destitute of every feeling of

wit and genius, as would appear by this damnatory criticism on all the wit and genius of his age. It is not, indeed, difficult to comprehend a different motive for this extravagant censure in the jealousy which even a great writer often experiences when he comes in contact with his living rivals, and hardily, if not impudently, practises those arts of critical detraction to raise a moment's delusion, which can gratify no one but himself.

The moral sense has often been found too weak to temper the malignancy of literary jealousy, and has impelled some men of genius to an incredible excess. A memorable example offers in the history of the two brothers, Dr. William and John Hunter, both great characters fitted to be rivals; but Nature, it was imagined, in the tenderness of blood, had placed a bar to rivalry. John, without any determined pursuit in his youth, was received by his brother at the height of his celebrity; the doctor initiated him into his school; they performed their experiments together; and William Hunter was the first to announce to the world the great genius of his brother. After this close connexion in all their studies and discoveries, Dr. William Hunter published his magnificent work—the proud favourite of his heart, the assertor of his fame. Was it credible that the genius of the celebrated anatomist, which had been nursed under the wing of his brother, should turn on that wing to clip it? John Hunter put in his claim to the chief discovery; it was answered by his brother. The Royal Society, to whom they appealed, concealed the documents of this unnatural feud. The blow was felt, and the jealousy of literary honour for ever separated the brothers—the brothers of genius.

Such, too, was the jealousy which separated Agostino and Annibal Carracci, whom their cousin Ludovico for so many years had attempted to unite, and who, during the time their academy existed, worked together, com-

bining their separate powers.* The learning and the philosophy of Agostino assisted the invention of the master genius, Annibal; but Annibal was jealous of the more literary and poetical character of Agostino, and, by his sarcastic humour, frequently mortified his learned brother. Alike great artists, when once employed on the same work, Agostino was thought to have excelled his brother. Annibal, sullen and scornful, immediately broke with him, and their patron, Cardinal Farnese, was compelled to separate the brothers. Their fate is striking: Agostino, divided from his brother Annibal, sunk into dejection and melancholy, and perished by a premature death, while Annibal closed his days not long after in a state of distraction. The brothers of Nature and Art could not live together, and could not live separate.

The history of artists abounds with instances of jealousy, perhaps more than that of any other class of men of genius. Hudson, the master of Reynolds, could not endure the sight of his rising pupil, and would not suffer him to conclude the term of his apprenticeship; even the mild and elegant Reynolds himself became so jealous of Wilson, that he took every opportunity of depreciating his singular excellence. Stung by the madness of jealousy, Barry one day addressing Sir Joshua on his lectures, burst out, "Such poor flimsy stuff as your discourses!" clenching his fist in the agony of the convulsion. After the death of the great artist, Barry bestowed on him the most ardent eulogium, and deeply grieved over the past. But the race of genius born too "near the sun" have found their increased sensibility flame into crimes of a deeper dye—crimes attesting the treachery and the violence of the professors of an art which, it appears, in softening the souls of others, does not necessarily mollify those of the artists themselves.

* See an article on the Carracci in "Curiosities of Literature," vol. ii.

The dreadful story of Andrea del Castagno seems not doubtful. Having been taught the discovery of painting in oil by Domenico Venetiano, yet, still envious of the merit of the generous friend who had confided that great secret to him, Andrea with his own hand secretly assassinated him, that he might remain without a rival. The horror of his crime only appeared in his confession on his death-bed. Domenichino seems to have been poisoned for the preference he obtained over the Neapolitan artists, which raised them to a man against him, and reduced him to the necessity of preparing his food with his own hand. On his last return to Naples, Passeri says, "*Non fu mai più veduto da buon occhio da quelli Napoletani: e li Pittori lo detestavano perchè egli era ritornato—morì con qualche sospetto di veleno, e questo non è inverisimile perchè l'interesso è un perfido tiranno.*" So that the Neapolitans honoured Genius at Naples by poison, which they might have forgotten had it flourished at Rome. The famous cartoon of the battle of Pisa, a work of Michael Angelo, which he produced in a glorious competition with the Homer of painting, Leonardo da Vinci, and in which he had struck out the idea of a new style, is only known by a print which has preserved the wonderful composition; for the original, it is said, was cut into pieces by the mad jealousy of Baccio Bandinelli, whose whole life was made miserable by his consciousness of a superior rival.

In the jealousy of genius, however, there is a peculiar case where the fever silently consumes the sufferer, without possessing the malignant character of the disease. Even the gentlest temper declines under its slow wastings, and this infection may happen among dear friends, whenever a man of genius loses that self-opinion which animates his solitary labours and constitutes his happiness. Perhaps when at the height of his class, he suddenly views himself eclipsed by another genius—and that

genius his friend! This is the jealousy, not of hatred, but of despair. Churchill observed the feeling, but probably included in it a greater degree of malignancy than I would now describe.

> Envy which turns pale,
> And sickens even if a friend prevail.

Swift, in that curious poem on his own death, said of Pope that

> He can in one couplet fix
> More sense than I can do in six.

The Dean, perhaps, is not quite serious, but probably is in the next lines—

> It gives me such a jealous fit,
> I cry "Pox take him and his wit."

If the reader pursue this hint throughout the poem, these compliments to his friends, always at his own expense, exhibit a singular mixture of the sensibility and the frankness of true genius, which Swift himself has honestly confessed.

> What poet would not grieve to see
> His brother write as well as he?*

Addison experienced this painful and mixed emotion in his intercourse with Pope, to whose rising celebrity he soon became too jealously alive.† It was more tenderly, but not less keenly, felt by the Spanish artist Castillo, a man distinguished by every amiable disposition. He was the great painter of Seville; but when some of his nephew Murillo's paintings were shown to him, he stood in meek astonishment before them, and

* The plain motive of all these dislikes is still more amusing, as given in this couplet of the same poem:—

> "If with such genius heaven has blest 'em,
> Have I not reason to detest 'em."—ED.

† See article on Pope and Addison in "Quarrels of Authors."

turning away, he exclaimed with a sigh—"*Yà murio Castillo!*" Castillo is no more! Returning home, the stricken genius relinquished his pencil, and pined away in hopelessness. The same occurrence happened to Pietro Perugino, the master of Raphael, whose general character as a painter was so entirely eclipsed by his far-renowned scholar; yet, while his real excellences in the ease of his attitudes and the mild grace of his female countenances have been passed over, it is probable that Raphael himself might have caught from them his first feelings of ideal beauty.

CHAPTER XIV.

Want of mutual esteem among men of genius often originates in a deficiency of analogous ideas.—It is not always envy or jealousy which induces men of genius to undervalue each other.

AMONG men of genius, that want of mutual esteem, usually attributed to envy or jealousy, often originates in a deficiency of analogous ideas, or of sympathy, in the parties. On this principle, several curious phenomena in the history of genius may be explained.

Every man of genius has a manner of his own; a mode of thinking and a habit of style, and usually decides on a work as it approximates or varies from his own. When one great author depreciates another, his depreciation has often no worse source than his own taste. The witty Cowley despised the natural Chaucer; the austere classical Boileau the rough sublimity of Crébillon; the refining Marivaux the familiar Molière. Fielding ridiculed Richardson, whose manner so strongly contrasted with his own; and Richardson contemned Fielding, and declared he would not last. Cumberland escaped

a fit of unforgiveness, not living to read his own character by Bishop Watson, whose logical head tried the lighter elegancies of that polished man by his own nervous genius, destitute of the beautiful in taste. There was no envy in the breast of Johnson when he advised Mrs. Thrale not to purchase "Gray's Letters," as trifling and dull, no more than there was in Gray himself when he sunk the poetical character of Shenstone, and debased his simplicity and purity of feeling by an image of ludicrous contempt. I have heard that Wilkes, a mere wit and elegant scholar, used to treat Gibbon as a mere bookmaker; and applied to that philosophical historian the verse by which Voltaire described, with so much caustic facetiousness, the genius of the Abbé Trablet—

Il a compilé, compilé, compilé.

The deficient sympathy in these men of genius for modes of feeling opposite to their own was the real cause of their opinions; and thus it happens that even superior genius is so often liable to be unjust and false in its decisions.

The same principle operates still more strikingly in the remarkable contempt of men of genius for those pursuits which require talents distinct from their own, and a cast of mind thrown by nature into another mould. Hence we must not be surprised at the poetical antipathies of Selden and Locke, as well as Longuerue and Buffon. Newton called poetry "ingenious nonsense." On the other side, poets undervalue the pursuits of the antiquary, the naturalist, and the metaphysician, forming their estimate by their own favourite scale of imagination. As we can only understand in the degree we comprehend, and feel in the degree in which we sympathize, we may be sure that in both these cases the parties will be found altogether deficient in those qualities of genius which constitute the excellence of the other. To this

cause, rather than to the one the friends of Mickle ascribed to Adam Smith, namely, a personal dislike to the poet, may we place the severe mortification which the unfortunate translator of Camoens suffered from the person to whom he dedicated "The Lusiad." The Duke of Buccleugh was the pupil of the great political economist, and so little valued an epic poem, that his Grace had not even the curiosity to open the leaves of the presentation copy.

A professor of polite literature condemned the study of botany, as adapted to mediocrity of talent, and only demanding patience; but Linnæus showed how a man of genius becomes a creator even in a science which seems to depend only on order and method. It will not be a question with some whether a man must be endowed with the energy and aptitude of genius, to excel in antiquarianism, in natural history, and similar pursuits. The prejudices raised against the claims of such to the honours of genius have probably arisen from the secluded nature of their pursuits, and the little knowledge which the men of wit and imagination possess of these persons, who live in a society of their own. On this subject a very curious circumstance has been revealed respecting Peiresc, whose enthusiasm for science was long felt throughout Europe. His name was known in every country, and his death was lamented in forty languages; yet was this great literary character unknown to several men of genius in his own country; Rochefoucauld declared he had never heard of his name, and Malherbe wondered why his death created so universal a sensation.

Madame De Stäel was an experienced observer of the habits of the literary character, and she has remarked how one student usually revolts from the other when *their occupations are different*, because they are a reciprocal annoyance. The scholar has nothing to say to the poet, the poet to the naturalist · and even among men of

science, those who are differently occupied avoid each other, taking little interest in what is out of their own circle. Thus we see the classes of literature, like the planets, revolving as distinct worlds; and it would not be less absurd for the inhabitants of Venus to treat with contempt the powers and faculties of those of Jupiter, than it is for the men of wit and imagination those of the men of knowledge and curiosity. The wits are incapable of exerting the peculiar qualities which give a real value to these pursuits, and therefore they must remain ignorant of their nature and their result.

It is not then always envy or jealousy which induces men of genius to undervalue each other; the want of sympathy will sufficiently account for the want of judgment. Suppose Newton, Quinault, and Machiavel accidentally meeting together, and unknown to each other, would they not soon have desisted from the vain attempt of communicating their ideas? The philosopher would have condemned the poet of the Graces as an intolerable trifler, and the author of "The Prince" as a dark political spy. Machiavel would have conceived Newton to be a dreamer among the stars, and a mere almanack-maker among men; and the other a rhymer, nauseously *doucereux*. Quinault might have imagined that he was seated between two madmen. Having annoyed each other for some time, they would have relieved their ennui by reciprocal contempt, and each have parted with a determination to avoid hence forward two such disagreeable companions.

CHAPTER XV.

Self-praise of genius.—The love of praise instinctive in the nature of genius.—A high opinion of themselves necessary for their great designs.—The Ancients openly claimed their own praise.—And several Moderns.—An author knows more of his merits than his readers.—And less of his defects.—Authors versatile in their admiration and their malignity.

VANITY, egotism, a strong sense of their own sufficiency, form another accusation against men of genius; but the complexion of self-praise must alter with the occasion; for the simplicity of truth may appear vanity, and the consciousness of superiority seem envy—to Mediocrity. It is we who do nothing, and cannot even imagine anything to be done, who are so much displeased with self-lauding, self-love, self-independence, self-admiration, which with the man of genius may often be nothing but an ostensible modification of the passion of glory.

He who exults in himself is at least in earnest; but he who refuses to receive that praise in public for which he has devoted so much labour in his privacy, is not; for he is compelled to suppress the very instinct of his nature. We censure no man for loving fame, but only for showing us how much he is possessed by the passion: thus we allow him to create the appetite, but we deny him its aliment. Our effeminate minds are the willing dupes of what is called the modesty of genius, or, as it has been termed, "the polished reserve of modern times;" and this from the selfish principle that it serves at least to keep out of the company its painful pre-eminence. But this "polished reserve," like something as fashionable, the ladies' rouge, at first appearing with rather too much colour, will in the heat of an evening die away till the true complexion come out. What subterfuges are resorted to by

these pretended modest men of genius, to extort that praise from their private circle which is thus openly denied them! They have been taken by surprise enlarging their own panegyric, which might rival Pliny's on Trajan, for care and copiousness; or impudently veiling themselves with the transparency of a third person; or never prefixing their name to the volume, which they would not easily forgive a friend to pass unnoticed.

Self-love is a principle of action; but among no class of human beings has nature so profusely distributed this principle of life and action as through the whole sensitive family of genius. It reaches even to a feminine susceptibility. The love of praise is instinctive in their nature. Praise with them is the evidence of the past and the pledge of the future. The generous qualities and the virtues of a man of genius are really produced by the applause conferred on him. "To him whom the world admires, the happiness of the world must be dear," said Madame De Stäel. Romney, the painter, held as a maxim that every diffident artist required "almost a daily portion of cheering applause." How often do such find their powers paralysed by the depression of confidence or the appearance of neglect! When the North Americans Indians, amid their circle, chant their gods and their heroes, the honest savages laud the living worthies, as well as their departed; and when, as we are told, an auditor hears the shout of his own name; he answers by a cry of pleasure and of pride. The savage and the man of genius are here true to nature, but pleasure and pride in his own name must raise no emotion in the breast of genius amidst a polished circle. To bring himself down to their usual mediocrity, he must start at an expression of regard, and turn away even from one of his own votaries. Madame De Stäel, an exquisite judge of the feelings of the literary character, was aware of this change, which has rather occurred in our manners than

in men of genius themselves. "Envy," says that eloquent writer, "among the Greeks, existed sometimes between rivals; it has now passed to the spectators; and by a strange singularity the mass of men are jealous of the efforts which are tried to add to their pleasures or to merit their approbation."

But this, it seems, is not always the case with men of genius, since the accusation we are noticing has been so often reiterated. Take from some that supreme confidence in themselves, that pride of exultation, and you crush the germ of their excellence. Many vast designs must have perished in the conception, had not their authors breathed this vital air of self-delight, this creative spirit, so operative in great undertakings. We have recently seen this principle in the literary character unfold itself in the life of the late Bishop of Landaff. Whatever he did, he felt it was done as a master: whatever he wrote, it was, as he once declared, the best work on the subject yet written. With this feeling he emulated Cicero in retirement or in action. "When I am dead, you will not soon meet with another John Hunter," said the great anatomist to one of his garrulous friends. An apology is formed by his biographer for relating the fact, but the weakness is only in the apology. When Hogarth was engaged in his work of the *Mariage à-la-Mode*, he said to Reynolds, "I shall very soon gratify the world with such a sight as they have never seen equalled."—"One of his foibles," adds Northcote, "it is well known, was the excessive high opinion he had of his own abilities." So pronounced Northcote, who had not an atom of his genius. Was it a *foible* in Hogarth to cast the glove, when he always more than redeemed the pledge? Corneille has given a very noble full-length of the sublime egotism which accompanied him through life;* but I doubt, if we had any such author in the pres-

* See it versified in "Curiosities of Literature," vol. i., p. 431.

ent day, whether he would dare to be so just to himself, and so hardy to the public. The self-praise of Buffon at least equalled his genius; and the inscription beneath his statue in the library, of the Jardin des Plantes, which I have been told was raised to him in his lifetime, exceeds all panegyric; it places him alone in nature, as the first and the last interpreter of her works. He said of the great geniuses of modern ages, that "there were not more than five; Newton, Bacon, Leibnitz, Montesquieu, and Myself." With this spirit he conceived and terminated his great works, and sat in patient meditation at his desk for half a century, till all Europe, even in a state of war, bowed to the modern Pliny.

Nor is the vanity of Buffon, and Voltaire, and Rousseau purely national; for men of genius in all ages have expressed a consciousness of the internal force of genius. No one felt this self-exultation more potent than our Hobbes; who has indeed, in his controversy with Wallis, asserted that there may be nothing more just than self-commendation.* There is a curious passage in the "Purgatorio" of Dante, where, describing the transitory nature of literary fame, and the variableness of human opinion, the poet alludes with confidence to his own future greatness. Of two authors of the name of Guido, the one having eclipsed the other, the poet writes:—

Così ha tolto l'uno all' altro Guido
La Gloria della lingua; e *forse è nato*
Chi l'uno e l'altro caccerà di nido.

Thus has one Guido from the other snatched
The letter'd pride; *and he perhaps is born*
Who shall drive either from their nest.†

De Thou, one of the most noble-minded of historians, in the Memoirs of his own life, composed in the third person, has surprised and somewhat puzzled the critics,

* See "Quarrels of Authors," p. 471. † Cary.

by that frequent distribution of self-commendation which they knew not how to reconcile with the modesty and gravity with which the President was so amply endowed. After his great and solemn labour, amidst the injustice of his persecutors, this eminent man had sufficient experience of his real worth to assert it. Kepler, amidst his sublime discoveries, looks down like a superior being on other men. He breaks forth in glory and daring egotism: "I dare insult mankind by confessing that I am he who has turned science to advantage. If I am pardoned, I shall rejoice; if blamed, I shall endure. The die is cast; I have written this book, and whether it be read by posterity or by my contemporaries is of no consequence; it may well wait for a reader during one century, when God himself during six thousand years has not sent an observer like myself." He truly predicts that "his discoveries would be verified in succeeding ages;" and prefers his own glory to the possession of the electorate of Saxony. It was this solitary majesty, this futurity of their genius, which hovered over the sleepless pillow of Bacon, of Newton, and of Montesquieu; of Ben Jonson, of Milton, and Corneille; and of Michael Angelo. Such men anticipate their contemporaries; they know they are creators, long before they are hailed as such by the tardy consent of the public. These men stand on Pisgah heights, and for them the sun shines on a land which none can view but themselves.

There is an admirable essay in Plutarch, "On the manner by which we may praise ourselves without exciting envy in others." The sage seems to consider self-praise as a kind of illustrious impudence, and has one very striking image: he compares these eulogists to famished persons, who finding no other food, in their rage have eaten their own flesh, and thus shockingly nourished themselves by their own substance. He allows persons in high office to praise themselves, if by this

they can repel calumny and accusations, as did Pericles before the Athenians: but the Romans found fault with Cicero, who so frequently reminded them of his exertions in the conspiracy of Catiline; while, when Scipio told them that "they should not presume to judge of a citizen to whom they owed the power of judging all men," the people covered themselves with flowers, and followed him to the capitol to join in a thanksgiving to Jove. "Cicero," adds Plutarch, "praised himself without necessity. Scipio was in personal danger, and this took away what is odious in self-praise." An author seems sometimes to occupy the situation of a person in high office; and there may be occasions when with a noble simplicity, if he appeal to his works, of which all men may judge, he may be permitted to assert or to maintain his claims. It has at least been the practice of men of genius, for in this very essay we find Timotheus, Euripides, and Pindar censured, though they deserved all the praise they gave themselves.

Epicurus, writing to a minister of state, declares, "If you desire glory, nothing can bestow it more than the letters I write to you:" and Seneca, in quoting these words, adds, "What Epicurus promised to his friends, that, my Lucilius, I promise you." *Orna me!* was the constant cry of Cicero; and he desires the historian Lucceius to write separately the conspiracy of Catiline, and to publish quickly, that while he yet lived he might taste the sweetness of his glory. Horace and Ovid were equally sensible to their immortality; but what modern poet would be tolerated with such an avowal? Yet Dryden honestly declares that it was better for him to own this failing of vanity, than the world to do it for him; and adds, "For what other reason have I spent my life in so unprofitable a study? Why am I grown old in seeking so barren a reward as fame? The same parts and application which have made me a poet might have

raised me to any honours of the gown." Was not Cervantes very sensible to his own merits when a rival started up? and did he not assert them too, and distinguish his own work by a handsome compliment? Lope de Vega celebrated his own poetic powers under the pseudonyme of a pretended editor, Thomas Barguillos. I regret that his noble biographer, than whom no one can more truly sympathise with the emotions of genius, has censured the bard for his querulous or his intrepid tone, and for the quaint conceit of his title-page, where his detractor is introduced as a beetle in a *vega* or garden, attacking its flowers, but expiring in the very sweetness he would injure. The inscription under Boileau's portrait, which gives a preference to the French satirist over Juvenal and Horace, is known to have been written by himself. Nor was Butler less proud of his own merits; for he has done ample justice to his "Hudibras," and traced out, with great self-delight, its variety of excellences. Richardson, the novelist, exhibits one of the most striking instances of what is called literary vanity, the delight of an author in his works; he has pointed out all the beauties of his three great works, in various manners.* He always taxed a visitor by one of his long letters. It was this intense self-delight which produced his voluminous labours.

There are certain authors whose very existence seems to require a high conception of their own talents; and who must, as some animals appear to do, furnish the means of life out of their own substance. These men of genius open their career with peculiar tastes, or with a predilection for some great work of no immediate interest; in a word, with many unpopular dispositions. Yet we see them magnanimous, though defeated, proceeding with the public feeling against them. At length we

* I have observed them in "Curiosities of Literature," vol. ii., p. 64.

view them ranking with their rivals. Without having yielded up their peculiar tastes or their incorrigible viciousness, they have, however, heightened their individual excellences. No human opinion can change their self-opinion. Alive to the consciousness of their powers, their pursuits are placed above impediment, and their great views can suffer no contraction; *possunt quia posse videntur.* Such was the language Lord Bacon once applied to himself when addressing a king. "I know," said the great philosopher, "that I am censured of some conceit of my ability or worth; but I pray your majesty impute it to desire—*possunt quia posse videntur.*" These men of genius bear a charmed mail on their breast; "hopeless, not heartless," may be often the motto of their ensign; and if they do not always possess reputation, they still look onwards for fame; for these do not necessarily accompany each other.

An author is more sensible of his own merits, as he also is of his labour, which is invisible to all others, while he is unquestionably much less sensible to his defects than most of his readers. The author not only comprehends his merits better, because they have passsed through a long process in his mind, but he is familiar with every part, while the reader has but a vague notion of the whole. Why does an excellent work, by repetition, rise in interest? Because in obtaining this gradual intimacy with an author, we appear to recover half the genius which we had lost on a first perusal. The work of genius too is associated, in the mind of the author, with much more than it contains; and the true supplement, which he only can give, has not always accompanied the work itself. We find great men often greater than the books they write. Ask the man of genius if he have written all that he wished to have written? Has he satisfied himself in this work, for which you accuse his pride? Has he dared what required intrepidity to achieve? Has he

evaded difficulties which he should have overcome? The mind of the reader has the limits of a mere recipient, while that of the author, even after his work, is teeming with creation. "On many occasions, my soul seems to know more than it can say, and to be endowed with a mind by itself, far superior to the mind I really have," said Marivaux, with equal truth and happiness.

With these explanations of what are called the vanity and egotism of Genius, be it remembered, that the sense of their own sufficiency is assumed by men at their own risk. The great man who thinks greatly of himself, is not diminishing that greatness in heaping fuel on his fire. It is indeed otherwise with his unlucky brethren, with whom an illusion of literary vanity may end in the aberrations of harmless madness; as it happened to Percival Stockdale. After a parallel between himself and Charles XII. of Sweden, he concludes that "some parts will be to *his* advantage, and some to *mine*;" but in regard to fame, the main object between himself and Charles XII., Percival imagined that "his own will not probably take its fixed and immovable station, and shine with its expanded and permanent splendour, till it consecrates his ashes, till it illumines his tomb." After this the reader, who may never have heard of the name of Percival Stockdale, must be told that there exist his own "Memoirs of his Life and Writings."* The memoirs of a scribbler who saw the prospects of life close on him while he imagined that his contemporaries were unjust, are instructive to literary men. To correct, and to be corrected, should be their daily practice, that they may be taught not only to exult in themselves, but to fear themselves.

It is hard to refuse these men of genius that *aura vitalis*, of which they are so apt to be liberal to others.

* I have sketched a character of Percival Stockdale, in "Calamities of Authors" (pp. 218–224); it was taken *ad vivum*.

Are they not accused of the meanest adulations? When a young writer experiences the notice of a person of some eminence, he has expressed himself in language which transcends that of mortality. A finer reason than reason itself inspires it. The sensation has been expressed with all its fulness by Milton:—

The debt immense of endless gratitude.

Who ever pays an "immense debt" in small sums? Every man of genius has left such honourable traces of his private affections; from Locke, whose dedication of his great work is more adulative than could be imagined from a temperate philosopher, to Churchill, whose warm eulogiums on his friends beautifully contrast with his satire. Even in advanced age, the man of genius dwells on the praise he caught in his youth from veteran genius, which, like the aloe, will flower at the end of life. When Virgil was yet a youth, it is said that Cicero heard one of his eclogues, and exclaimed with his accustomed warmth,

Magna spes altera Romæ!

"The second hope of mighty Rome!" intending by the first either himself or Lucretius. The words of Cicero were the secret honey on which the imagination of Virgil fed for many a year; for in one of his latest productions, the twelfth book of the Æneid, he applies these very words to Ascanius. So long had the accents of Cicero's praise lingered in the poet's ear!

This extreme susceptibility of praise in men of genius is the same exuberant sensibility which is so alive to censure. I have elsewhere fully shown how some have died of criticism.* The self-love of genius is perhaps much more delicate than gross.

But this fatal susceptibility is the cause of that strange facility which has often astonished the world, by the

* In the article entitled "Anecdotes of Censured Authors," in vol. i. of "Curiosities of Literature."

sudden transitions of sentiment which literary characters have frequently exhibited. They have eulogised men and events which they had reprobated, and reprobated what they had eulogised. The recent history of political revolutions has furnished some monstrous examples of this subservience to power. Guicciardini records one of his own times, which has been often repeated in ours. Jovianus Pontanus, the Secretary of Ferdinand, King of Naples, was also selected to be the tutor of the prince, his son. When Charles VIII. of France invaded Naples, Pontanus was deputed to address the French conqueror. To render himself agreeable to the enemies of his country, he did not avoid expatiating on the demerits of his expelled patrons: "So difficult it is," adds the grave and dignified historian, "for ourselves to observe that moderation and those precepts which no man knew better than Pontanus, who was endowed with such copious literature, and composed with such facility in moral philosophy, and possessed such acquirements in universal erudition, that he had made himself a prodigy to the eye of the world."* The student, occupied by abstract pursuits, may not indeed always take much interest in the change of dynasties; and perhaps the famous cancelled dedication to Cromwell, by the learned orientalist, Dr. Castell,† who supplied its place by another to Charles II., ought not to be placed to the account of political tergiversation. But the versatile adoration of the continental *savans* of the republic or the monarchy, the consul or the emperor, has inflicted an unhealing wound on the literary character; since, like Pontanus, to gratify their new master, they had not the greatness of mind to save themselves from ingratitude to their old.

* Guicciardini, Book II.

† For the melancholy history of this devoted scholar, see note to the article on "The Rewards of Oriental Students," in "Calamities of Authors," p. 189.

Their vengeance, as quickly kindled, lasts as long. Genius is a dangerous gift of nature. The same effervescent passions from a Catiline or a Cicero. Plato lays great stress on his man of genius possessing the most vehement passions, but he adds reason to restrain them. It is Imagination which by their side stands as their good or evil spirit. Glory or infamy is but a different direction of the same passion.

How are we to describe symptoms which, flowing from one source, yet show themselves in such opposite forms as those of an intermittent fever, a silent delirium, or a horrid hypochondriasm? Have we no other opiate to still the agony, no other cordial to warm the heart, than the great ingredient in the recipe of Plato's visionary man of genius—calm reason? Must men, who so rarely obtain this tardy panacea, remain with all their tortured and torturing passions about them, often self-disgusted, self-humiliated? The enemies of genius are often connected with their morbid imagination. These originate in casual slights, or in unguarded expressions, or in hasty opinions, or in witty derisions, or even in the obtruding goodness of tender admonition. The man of genius broods over the phantom that darkens his feelings: he multiplies a single object; he magnifies the smallest; and suspicions become certainties. It is in this unhappy state that he sharpens his vindictive fangs, in a libel called his "Memoirs," or in another species of public outrage, styled a "Criticism."

We are told that Comines the historian, when residing at the court of the Count de Charolois, afterwards Duke of Burgundy, one day returning from hunting, with inconsiderate jocularity sat down before the Count and ordered the prince to pull off his boots. The Count would not affect greatness, and having executed his commission, in return for the princely amusement, the Count dashed the boot on Comines' nose, which bled; and from

that time, he was mortified at the court of Burgundy, by retaining the nickname of *the booted head.* The blow rankled in the heart of the man of genius, and the Duke of Burgundy has come down to us in Comines' "Memoirs," blackened by his vengeance. Many, unknown to their readers, like Comines, have had a booted head; but the secret poison is distilled on their lasting page, as we have recently witnessed in Lord Waldegrave's "Memoirs." Swift's perpetual malevolence to Dryden originated in that great poet's prediction, that "cousin Swift would never be a poet;" a prediction which the wit never could forget. I have elsewhere fully written a tale of literary hatred, where is seen a man of genius, in the character of Gilbert Stuart, devoting a whole life to harassing the industry or the genius which he himself could not attain.*

A living Italian poet of great celebrity, when at the court of Rome, presented a magnificent edition of his poetry to Pius VI. The bard, Mr. Hobhouse informs us, lived not in the good graces of his holiness, and although the pontiff accepted the volume, he did not forbear a severity of remark which could not fall unheeded by the modern poet; for on this occasion, repeating some verses of Metastasio, his holiness drily added, "No one now-a-days writes like that great poet." Never was this to be erased from memory; the stifled resentment of Monti vehemently broke forth at the moment the French carried off Pius VI. from Rome. Then the long indignant secretary poured forth an invective more severe "against the great harlot," than was ever traced by a Protestant pen—Monti now invoked the rock of Sardinia; the poet bade it fly from its base, that *the last of monsters* might not find even a tomb to shelter him. Such was the curse of a poet on his former patron, now an object of misery, a return for "placing him below Metastasio!"

* See "Calamities of Authors," pp. 131–139.

The French Revolution affords illustrations of the worst human passions. When the wretched Collot D'Herbois was tossed up in the storm to the summit of power, a monstrous imagination seized him; he projected razing the city of Lyons and massacring its inhabitants. He had even the heart to commence, and to continue this conspiracy against human nature; the ostensible crime was royalism, but the secret motive is said to have been literary vengeance! As wretched a poet and actor as a man, D'Herbois had been hissed off the theatre at Lyons, and to avenge that ignominy, he had meditated over this vast and remorseless crime. Is there but one Collot D' Herbois in the universe?

Long since this was written, a fact has been recorded of Chenier, the French dramatic poet, which parallels the horrid tale of Collot D'Herbois, which some have been willing to doubt from its enormity. It is said, that this monster, in the revolutionary period, when he had the power to save the life of his brother André, while his father, prostrate before a wretched son, was imploring for the life of an innocent brother, remained silent; it is further said that he appropriated to himself a tragedy which he found among his brother's manuscripts. "Fratricide from literary jealousy," observes the relator of this anecdote, "was a crime reserved for a modern French revolutionist."* There are some pathetic stanzas which André was composing in his last moments, when awaiting his fate; the most pathetic of all stanzas is that one which he left unfinished—

Peut-être, avant que l'heure en cercle promenée
Ait posé, sur l'émail brillant,
Dans les soixante pas où sa route est bornée,
Son pied sonore et vigilant,
Le sommeil du tombeau pressera ma paupière—

* *Edinburgh Review*, xxx. 159.

At this unfinished stanza was the pensive poet summoned to the guillotine!

CHAPTER XVI.

The domestic life of genius.—Defects of great compositions attributed to domestic infelicities.—The home of the literary character should be the abode of repose and silence.—Of the Father.—Of the Mother.—Of family genius.—Men of genius not more respected than other men in their domestic circle.—The cultivators of science and art do not meet on equal terms with others, in domestic life.—Their neglect of those around them.—Often accused of imaginary crimes.

WHEN the temper and the leisure of the literary character are alike broken, even his best works, the too faithful mirrors of his state of mind, will participate in its inequalities; and surely the incubations of genius, in its delicate and shadowy combinations, are not less sensible in their operation than the composition of sonorous bodies, where, while the warm metal is settling in the mould, even an unusual vibration of the air during the moment of fusion will injure the tone.

Some of the conspicuous blemishes of several great compositions may be attributed to the domestic infelicities of their authors. The desultory life of Camoens is imagined to be perceptible in the deficient connexion of his epic; and Milton's blindness and divided family prevented that castigating criticism, which otherwise had erased passages which have escaped from his revising hand. He felt himself in the situation of his Samson Agonistes, whom he so pathetically describes—

His foes' derision, captive, poor, and blind.

Even Locke complains of his "discontinued way of writing," and "writing by incoherent parcels," from the

avocations of a busy and unsettled life, which undoubtedly produced a deficiency of method in the disposition of the materials of his great work. The careless rapid lines of Dryden are justly attributed to his distress, and indeed he pleads for his inequalities from his domestic circumstances. Johnson often silently, but eagerly, corrected the "Ramblers" in their successive editions, of which so many had been despatched in haste. The learned Greaves offered some excuses for his errors in his edition of "Abulfeda," from "his being five years encumbered with lawsuits, and diverted from his studies." When at length he returned to them, he expresses his surprise "at the pains he had formerly undergone," but of which he now felt himself unwilling, he knew not how, of again undergoing." Goldoni, when at the bar, abandoned his comic talent for several years; and having resumed it, his first comedy totally failed: "My head," says he, "was occupied with my professional employment; I was uneasy in mind and in bad humour." A lawsuit, a bankruptcy, a domestic feud, or an indulgence in criminal or in foolish pursuits, have chilled the fervour of imagination, scattered into fragments many a noble design, and paralysed the finest genius. The distractions of Guido's studies from his passion for gaming, and of Parmegiano's for alchemy, have been traced in their works, which are often hurried over and unequal. It is curious to observe, that Cumberland attributes the excellence of his comedy, *The West Indian*, to the peculiarly happy situation in which he found himself at the time of its composition, free from the incessant avocations which had crossed him in the writing of *The Brothers*. "I was master of my time, my mind was free, and I was happy in the society of the dearest friends I had on earth. The calls of office, the cavillings of angry rivals, and the gibings of newspaper critics, could not reach me on the banks of the Shannon, where all within-doors was love

and affection. In no other period of my life have the same happy circumstances combined to cheer me in any of my literary labours."

The best years of Mengs' life were embittered by his father, a poor artist, and who, with poorer feelings, converted his home into a prison-house, forced his son into the slavery of stipulated task-work, while bread and water were the only fruits of the fine arts. In this domestic persecution, the son contracted those morose and saturnine habits which in after-life marked the character of the ungenial Mengs. Alonso Cano, a celebrated Spanish painter, would have carried his art to perfection, had not the unceasing persecution of the Inquisitors entirely deprived him of that tranquillity so necessary to the very existence of art. Ovid, in exile on the barren shores of Tomos, deserted by his genius, in his copious *Tristia* loses much of the luxuriance of his fancy.

We have a remarkable evidence of domestic unhappiness annihilating the very faculty of genius itself, in the case of Dr. Brook Taylor, the celebrated author of the "Linear Perspective." This great mathematician in early life distinguished himself as an inventor in science, and the most sanguine hopes of his future discoveries were raised both at home and abroad. Two unexpected events in domestic life extinguished his inventive faculties. After the loss of two wives, whom he regarded with no common affection, he became unfitted for profound studies; he carried his own personal despair into his favourite objects of pursuit, and abandoned them. The inventor of the most original work suffered the last fifteen years of his life to drop away, without hope, and without exertion; nor is this a solitary instance, where a man of genius, deprived of the idolised partner of his existence, has no longer been able to find an object in his studies, and where even fame itself has ceased to interest. The reason which Rousseau alleges for the cyni-

cal spleen which so frequently breathes forth in his works, shows how the domestic character of the man of genius leaves itself in his productions. After describing the infelicity of his domestic affairs, occasioned by the mother of Theresa, and Theresa herself, both women of the lowest class and the worst dispositions, he adds, on this wretched marriage, "These unexpected, disagreeable events, in a state of my own choice, plunged me into literature, to give a new direction and diversion to my mind; and in all my first works I scattered that bilious humour which had occasioned this very occupation." Our author's character in his works was the very opposite to the one in which he appeared to these low people. Feeling his degradation among them, for they treated his simplicity as utter silliness, his personal timidity assumed a tone of boldness and originality in his writings, while a strong personal sense of shame heightened his causticity, and he delighted to contemn that urbanity in which he had never shared, and which he knew not how to practise. His miserable subservience to these people was the real cause of his oppressed spirit calling out for some undefined freedom in society; and thus the real Rousseau, with all his disordered feelings, only appeared in his writings. The secrets of his heart were confided to his pen.

"The painting-room must be like Eden before the Fall; no joyless turbulent passions must enter there"—exclaims the enthusiast Richardson. The home of the literary character should be the abode of repose and of silence. There must he look for the feasts of study, in progressive and alternate labours; a taste "which," says Gibbon, "I would not exchange for the treasures of India." Rousseau had always a work going on, for rainy days and spare hours, such as his "Dictionary of Music:" a variety of works never tired; it was the single one which exhausted. Metastasio looks with

delight on his variety, which resembled the fruits in the garden of Armida—

> E mentre spunta l'un, l'altro mature.
> While one matures, the other buds and blows.

Nor is it always fame, or any lower motive, which may induce the literary character to hold an unwearied pen. Another equally powerful exists, which must remain inexplicable to him who knows not to escape from the listlessness of life—it is the passion for literary occupation. He whose eye can only measure the space occupied by the voluminous labours of the elder Pliny, of a Mazzuchelli, a Muratori, a Montfaucon, and a Gough, all men who laboured from the love of labour, and can see nothing in that space but the industry which filled it, is like him who only views a city at a distance—the streets and the edifices, and all the life and population within, he can never know. These literary characters projected their works as so many schemes to escape from uninteresting pursuits; and, in these folios, how many evils of life did they bury, while their happiness expanded with their volume! Aulus Gellius desired to live no longer than he was able to retain the faculty of writing and observing. The literary character must grow as impassioned with his subject as Ælian with his "History of Animals;" "wealth and honour I might have obtained at the courts of princes; but I preferred the delight of multiplying my knowledge. I am aware that the avaricious and the ambitious will accuse me of folly; but I have always found most pleasure in observing the nature of animals, studying their character, and writing their history."

Even with those who have acquired their celebrity, the love of literary labour is not diminished—a circumstance recorded by the younger Pliny of Livy. In a preface to one of his lost books, that historian had said that he had

obtained sufficient glory by his former writings on the Roman history, and might now repose in silence; but his mind was so restless and so abhorrent of indolence, that it only felt its existence in literary exertion. In a similar situation the feeling was fully experienced by Hume. Our philosopher completed his history neither for money nor for fame, having then more than a sufficiency of both; but chiefly to indulge a habit as a resource against indolence.* These are the minds which are without hope if they are without occupation.

Amidst the repose and silence of study, delightful to the literary character, are the soothing interruptions of the voices of those whom he loves, recalling him from his abstractions into social existence. These re-animate his languor, and moments of inspiration are caught in the emotions of affection, when a father or a friend, a wife, a daughter, or a sister, become the participators of his own tastes, the companions of his studies, and identify their happiness with his fame. A beautiful incident in the domestic life of literature is one which Morellet has revealed of Marmontel. In presenting his collected works to his wife, she discovered that the author had dedicated his volumes to herself; but the dedication was not made painful to her modesty, for it was not a public one. Nor was it so concise as to be mistaken for a compliment. The theme

* This appears in one of his interesting letters first published in the *Literary Gazette*, Oct. 20, 1821.—[It is addressed to Adam Smith, dated July 28, 1759, and he says, "I signed an agreement with Mr. Millar, where I mention that I proposed to write the History of England from the beginning till the accession of Henry VII.; and he engages to give me 1400*l.* for the copy. This is the first previous agreement ever I made with a bookseller. I shall execute the work at leisure, without fatiguing myself by such ardent application as I have hitherto employed. It is chiefly as a resource against idleness that I shall undertake the work, for as to money I have enough; and as to reputation what I have wrote already will be sufficient, if it be good; if not, it is not likely I shall now write better."]

was copious, for the heart overflowed in the pages consecrated to her domestic virtues; and Marmontel left it as a record, that their children might learn the gratitude of their father, and know the character of their mother, when the writer should be no more. Many readers were perhaps surprised to find in Necker's *Comte rendu au Roi*, a political and financial work, a great and lovely character of domestic excellence in his wife. This was more obtrusive than Marmontel's private dedication; yet it was not the less sincere. If Necker failed in the cautious reserve of private feelings, who will censure? Nothing seems misplaced which the heart dictates.

If Horace were dear to his friends, he declares they owed him to his father:—

> purus et insons
> (Ut me collaudem) si vivo et carus amicis,
> Causa fuit Pater his.
>
> If pure and innocent, if dear (forgive
> These little praises) to my friends I live,
> My father was the cause.

This intelligent father, an obscure tax-gatherer, discovered the propensity of Horace's mind; for he removed the boy of genius from a rural seclusion to the metropolis, anxiously attending on him to his various masters. Grotius, like Horace, celebrated in verse his gratitude to his excellent father, who had formed him not only to be a man of learning, but a great character. Vitruvius pours forth a grateful prayer to the memory of his parents, who had instilled into his soul a love for literary and philosophical subjects; and it is an amiable trait in Plutarch to have introduced his father in the Symposiacs, as an elegant critic and moralist, and his brother Lamprias, whose sweetness of disposition, inclining to cheerful raillery, the Sage of Cheronæa has immortalised. The father of Gibbon urged him to literary distinction, and the

dedication of the "Essay on Literature" to that father, connected with his subsequent labour, shows the force of the excitement. The father of Pope lived long enough to witness his son's celebrity.

> Tears such as tender fathers shed,
> Warm from my eyes descend,
> For joy, to think when I am dead,
> My son shall have mankind his Friend.*

The son of Buffon one day surprised his father by the sight of a column, which he had raised to the memory of his father's eloquent genius. "It will do you honour," observed the Gallic sage.† And when that son in the revolution was led to the guillotine, he ascended in silence, so impressed with his father's fame, that he only told the people, "I am the son of Buffon!"

Fathers absorbed in their occupations can but rarely attract their offspring. The first durable impressions of our moral existence come from the mother. The first prudential wisdom to which Genius listens falls from her lips, and only her caresses can create the moments of tenderness. The earnest discernment of a mother's love survives in the imagination of manhood. The mother of Sir William Jones, having formed a plan for the education of her son, withdrew from great connexions that she might live only for that son. Her great principle of education, was to excite by curiosity; the result could not fail to be knowledge. "Read, and you will know," she constantly replied to her filial pupil. And we have his own acknowledgment, that to this maxim, which produced the habit of study, he was indebted for his future attainments. Kant, the German metaphysician, was always

* These lines have been happily applied by Mr. Bowles to the father of Pope.—The poet's domestic affections were as permanent as they were strong.

† It still exists in the gardens of the old chateau at Montbard. It is a pillar of marble bearing this inscription:—"Excelsæ turris humilis columna, Parenti suo filius Buffon. 1785."—Ed.

fond of declaring that he owed to the ascendancy of his mother's character the severe inflexibility of his moral principles. The mother of Burns kindled his genius by reciting the old Scottish ballads, while to his father he attributed his less pleasing cast of character. Bishop Watson traced to the affectionate influence of his mother, the religious feelings which he confesses he inherited from her. The mother of Edgeworth, confined through life to her apartment, was the only person who studied his constitutional volatility. When he hastened to her death-bed, the last imperfect accents of that beloved voice reminded him of the past and warned him of the future, and he declares that voice "had a happy influence on his habits,"—as happy, at least, as his own volatile nature would allow. "To the manner in which my mother formed me at an early age," said Napoleon, "I principally owe my subsequent elevation. My opinion is, that the future good or bad conduct of a child entirely depends upon the mother."

There is this remarkable in the strong affections of the mother in the formation of the literary character, that, without even partaking of, or sympathising with the pleasures the child is fond of, the mother will often cherish those first decided tastes merely from the delight of promoting the happiness of her son; so that that genius, which some would produce on a preconceived system, or implant by stratagem, or enforce by application, with her may be only the watchful labour of love.* One of our most eminent antiquaries has often assured me that his great passion, and I may say his genius, for his curious

* Kotzebue has noted the delicate attention of his mother in not only fostering his genius, but in watching its too rapid development. He says:—"If at any time my imagination was overheated, my mother always contrived to select something for my evening reading which might moderate this ardour, and make a gentler impression on my too irritable fancy."—Ed.

knowledge and his vast researches, he attributes to maternal affection. When his early taste for these studies was thwarted by the very different one of his father, the mother silently supplied her son with the sort of treasures he languished for, blessing the knowledge, which indeed she could not share with him, but which she beheld imparting happiness to her youthful antiquary.

There is, what may be called, FAMILY GENIUS. In the home of a man of genius is diffused an electrical atmosphere, and his own pre-eminence strikes out talents in all. "The active pursuits of my father," says the daughter of Edgeworth, "spread an animation through the house by connecting children with all that was going on, and allowing them to join in thought and conversation; sympathy and emulation excited mental exertion in the most agreeable manner." Evelyn, in his beautiful retreat at Saye's Court, had inspired his family with that variety of taste which he himself was spreading throughout the nation. His son translated Rapin's "Gardens," which poem the father proudly preserved in his "Sylva;" his lady, ever busied in his study, excelled in the arts her husband loved, and designed the frontispiece to his "Lucretius:" she was the cultivator of their celebrated garden, which served as "an example" of his great work on "forest trees." Cowley, who has commemorated Evelyn's love of books and gardens, has delightfully applied them to his lady, in whom, says the bard, Evelyn meets both pleasures:—

> The fairest garden in her looks,
> And in her mind the wisest books,

The house of Haller resembled a temple consecrated to science and the arts, and the votaries were his own family. The universal acquirements of Haller were possessed in some degree by every one under his roof; and their studious delight in transcribing manuscripts,

in consulting authors, in botanising, drawing and colouring the plants under his eye, formed occupations which made the daughters happy and the sons eminent.* The painter Stella inspired his family to copy his fanciful inventions, and the playful graver of Claudine Stella, his niece, animated his "Sports of Children." I have seen a print of Coypel in his *studio*, and by his side his little daughter, who is intensely watching the progress of her father's pencil. The artist has represented himself in the act of suspending his labour to look on his child. At that moment, his thoughts were divided between two objects of his love. The character and the works of the late Elizabeth Hamilton were formed entirely by her brother. Admiring the man she loved, she imitated what she admired; and while the brother was arduously completing the version of the Persian Hedaya, the sister, who had associated with his morning tasks and his evening conversations, was recalling all the ideas, and pourtraying her fraternal master in her "Hindoo Rajah."

Nor are there wanting instances where this FAMILY GENIUS has been carried down through successive generations: the volume of the father has been continued by a son, or a relative. The history of the family of the Zwingers is a combination of studies and inherited tastes. Theodore published, in 1697, a folio herbal, of which his son Frederic gave an enlarged edition in 1744; and the family was honoured by their name having been given to a genus of plants dedicated to their memory, and known in botany by the name of the *Zwingera*. In history and in literature, the family name was equally

* Haller's death (A. D. 1777) was as remarkable for its calm philosophy, as his life for its happiness. He was a professional surgeon, and continued to the last an attentive and rational observer of the symptoms of the disease which was bringing him to the grave. He transmitted to the University of Gottingen a scientific analysis of his case; and died feeling his own pulse.—ED.

eminent; the same Theodore continued a great work, "The Theatre of Human Life," which had been begun by his father-in-law, and which for the third time was enlarged by another son. Among the historians of Italy, it is delightful to contemplate this family genius transmitting itself with unsullied probity among the three Villanis, and the Malaspinis, and the two Portas. The history of the learned family of the Stephens presents a dynasty of literature; and to distinguish the numerous members, they have been designated as Henry I. and Henry II.,—as Robert I., the II., and the III.* Our country may exult in having possessed many literary families—the Wartons, the father and two sons: the Burneys, more in number; and the nephews of Milton, whose humble torch at least was lighted at the altar of the great bard.†

No event in literary history is more impressive than the fate of Quintilian; it was in the midst of his elaborate work, which was composed to form the literary character of a son, that he experienced the most terrible affliction in the domestic life of genius—the successive deaths of his wife and his only child. It was a moral earthquake with a single survivor amidst the ruins. An awful burst of parental and literary affliction breaks forth in Quintilian's lamentation,—"My wealth, and my writings the fruits of a long and painful life, must now be reserved only for strangers; all I possess is for aliens, and no longer mine!" We feel the united agony of the husband, the father, and the man of genius!

Deprived of these social consolations, we see Johnson call about him those whose calamities exiled them from society, and his roof lodges the blind, the lame and the

* For an account of them and their works, see "Curiosities of Literature," vol. i., p. 76.

† The Phillips.

poor for the heart must possess something it can call its own, to be kind to.

In domestic life, the Abbé De St. Pierre enlarged its moral vocabulary, by fixing in his language two significant words. One served to explain the virtue most familiar to him *bienfaisance;* and that irritable vanity which magnifies its ephemeral fame, the sage reduced to a mortifying diminutive—*la gloriole!*

It has often excited surprise that men of genius are not more reverenced than other men in their domestic circle. The disparity between the public and the private esteem of the same man is often striking. In privacy we discover that the comic genius is not always cheerful, that the sage is sometimes ridiculous, and the poet seldom delightful. The golden hour of invention must terminate like other hours, and when the man of genius returns to the cares, the duties, the vexations, and the amusements of life, his companions behold him as one of themselves—the creature of habits and infirmities.

In the business of life, the cultivators of science and the arts, with all their simplicity of feeling, and generous openness about them, do not meet on equal terms with other men. Their frequent abstractions calling off the mind to whatever enters into its lonely pursuits, render them greatly inferior to others in practical and immediate observation. Studious men have been reproached as being so deficient in the knowledge of the human character, that they are usually disqualified for the management of public business. Their confidence in their friends has no bound, while they become the easy dupes of the designing. A friend, who was in office with the late Mr. Cumberland, assures me that he was so intractable to the forms of business, and so easily induced to do more or to do less than he ought, that he was compelled to perform the official business of this literary man, to free himself from his annoyance; and

yet Cumberland could not be reproached with any deficiency in a knowledge of the human character, which he was always touching with caustic pleasantry.

Addison and Prior were unskilful statesmen; and Malesherbes confessed, a few days before his death, that Turgot and himself, men of genius and philosophers, from whom the nation had expected much, had badly administered the affairs of the state; for "knowing men but by books, and unskilful in business, we could not form the king to the government." A man of genius may know the whole map of the world of human nature; but, like the great geographer, may be apt to be lost in the wood which any one in the neighbourhood knows better than him.

"The conversation of a poet," says Goldsmith, "is that of a man of sense, while his actions are those of a fool." Genius, careless of the future, and often absent in the present, avoids too deep a commingling in the minor cares of life. Hence it becomes a victim to common fools and vulgar villains. "I love my family's welfare, but I cannot be so foolish as to make myself the slave to the minute affairs of a house," said Montesquieu. The story told of a man of learning is probably true, however ridiculous it may appear. Deeply occupied in his library, one, rushing in, informed him that the house was on fire: "Go to my wife—these matters belong to her!" pettishly replied the interrupted student. Bacon sat at one end of his table wrapt in many a reverie, while at the other the creatures about him were trafficking with his honour, and ruining his good name: "I am better fitted for this," said that great man once, holding out a book, "than for the life I have of late led. Nature has not fitted me for that; knowing myself by inward calling to be fitter to hold a book than to play a part."

Buffon, who consumed his mornings in his old tower of

Montbard, at the end of his garden,* with all nature opening to him, formed all his ideas of what was passing before him from the arts of a pliant Capuchin, and the comments of a perruquier on the scandalous chronicle of the village. These humble confidants he treated as children, but the children were commanding the great man! Young, whose satires give the very anatomy of human foibles, was wholly governed by his housekeeper. She thought and acted for him, which probably greatly assisted the "Night Thoughts," but his curate exposed the domestic economy of a man of genius by a satirical novel. If I am truly informed, in that gallery of satirical portraits in his "Love of Fame," Young has omitted one of the most striking—his own! While the poet's eye was glancing from "earth to heaven," he totally overlooked the lady whom he married, and who soon became the object of his contempt; and not only his wife, but his only son, who when he returned home for the vacation from Winchester school, was only admitted into the presence of his poetical father on the first and the last day; and whose unhappy life is attributed to this unnatural neglect:†—a lamentable domestic catastrophe, which, I fear, has too frequently occurred amidst the ardour and occupations of literary glory. Much, too much, of the tender domesticity of life is violated by literary characters. All that lives under their eye, all that should be guided by their hand, the recluse and abstracted men of genius must leave to their own direction. But let it not be forgotten, that, if such neglect others, they also neglect themselves, and are deprived

* For some account of this place, see the chapter on "Literary Residences" in vol. iii., p. 395, of "Curiosities of Literature."

† These facts are drawn from a manuscript of the late Sir Herbert Croft, who regretted that Dr. Johnson would not suffer him to give this account during the doctor's lifetime, in his Life of Young, but which it had always been his intention to have added to it.

of those family enjoyments for which few men have warmer sympathies. While the literary character burns with the ambition of raising a great literary name, he is too often forbidden to taste of this domestic intercourse, or to indulge the versatile curiosity of his private amusements—for he is chained to his great labour. Robertson felt this while employed on his histories, and he at length rejoiced when, after many years of devoted toil, he returned to the luxury of reading for his own amusement and to the conversation of his friends. "Such a sacrifice," observes his philosophical biographer, "must be more or less made by all who devote themselves to letters, whether with a view to emolument or to fame; nor would it perhaps be easy to make it, were it not for the prospect (seldom, alas! realised) of earning by their exertions that learned and honourable leisure which he was so fortunate as to attain."

But men of genius have often been accused of imaginary crimes. Their very eminence attracts the lie of calumny, which tradition often conveys beyond the possibility of refutation. Sometimes they are reproached as wanting in affection, when they displease their fathers by making an obscure name celebrated. The family of Descartes lamented, as a blot in their escutcheon, that Descartes, who was born a gentleman, should become a philosopher; and this elevated genius was refused the satisfaction of embracing an unforgiving parent, while his dwarfish brother, with a mind diminutive as his person, ridiculed his philosophic relative, and turned to advantage his philosophic disposition. The daughter of Addison was educated with a perfect contempt of authors, and blushed to bear a name more illustrious than that of all the Warwicks, on her alliance to which noble family she prided herself. The children of Milton, far from solacing the age of their blind parent, became impatient for his death, embittered his last hours with scorn and disaffection, and

combined to cheat and rob him. Milton, having enriched our national poetry by two immortal epics, with patient grief blessed the single female, who did not entirely abandon him, and the obscure fanatic who was pleased with his poems because they were religious. What felicities! what laurels! And now we have recently learned, that the daughter of Madame de Sévigné lived on ill terms with her mother, of whose enchanting genius she appears to have been insensible! The unquestionable documents are two letters hitherto cautiously secreted. The daughter was in the house of her mother, when an extraordinary letter was addressed to her from the chamber of Madame de Sévigné after a sleepless night. In this she describes, with her peculiar felicity, the ill-treatment she received from the daughter she idolised; it is a kindling effusion of maternal reproach, and tenderness, and genius.*

Some have been deemed disagreeable companions, because they felt the weariness of dulness, or the impertinence of intrusion; described as bad husbands, when united to women who, without a kindred feeling, had the mean art to prey upon their infirmities; or as bad fathers, because their offspring have not always reflected the moral beauty of their own page. But the magnet loses nothing of its virtue, even when the particles about it, incapable themselves of being attracted, are not acted on by its occult property.

CHAPTER XVII.

The poverty of Literary men.—Poverty, a relative quality.—Of the poverty of literary men in what degree desirable.—Extreme poverty.—Task-work.—Of gratuitious works.—A project to provide against the worst state of poverty among literary men.

POVERTY is a state not so fatal to genius, as it is usually conceived to be. We shall find that it has

* Lettres inédites de Madame de Sévigné, pp. 201 and 203.

been sometimes voluntarily chosen; and that to connect too closely great fortune with great genius, creates one of those powerful but unhappy alliances, where the one party must necessarily act contrary to the interests of the other.

Poverty is a relative quality, like cold and heat, which are but the increase or the diminution in our own sensations. The positive idea must arise from comparison. There is a state of poverty reserved even for the wealthy man, the instant that he comes in hateful contact with the enormous capitalist. But there is a poverty neither vulgar nor terrifying, asking no favours, and on no terms receiving any; a poverty which annihilates its ideal evils; and, becoming even a source of pride, will confer independence, that first step to genius.

Among the continental nations, to accumulate wealth, in the spirit of a capitalist does not seem to form the prime object of domestic life. The traffic of money is with them left to the traffickers, their merchants, and their financiers. In our country the commercial character has so closely interwoven and identified itself with the national one, and its peculiar views have so terminated all our pursuits, that every rank is alike influenced by its spirit, and things are valued by a market-price which naturally admits of no such appraisement. In a country where "The Wealth of Nations" has been fixed as the first principle of political existence, wealth has raised an aristocracy more noble than nobility, more celebrated than genius, more popular than patriotism; but however it may partake at times of a generous nature, it hardly looks beyond its own narrow pale. It is curious to notice that Montesquieu, who was in England, observed, that "If I had been born here, nothing could have consoled me in failing to accumulate a large fortune; but I do not lament the mediocrity of my circumstances in France." The sources of our national wealth have greatly multiplied,

and the evil has consequently increased, since the visit of the great philosopher.

The cares of property, the daily concerns of a family, the pressure of such minute disturbers of their studies, have induced some great minds to regret the abolition of those monastic orders, beneath whose undisturbed shade were produced the mighty labours of a Montfaucon, a Calmet, a Florez, and the still unfinished volumes of the Benedictines. Often has the literary character, amidst the busied delights of study, sighed "to bid a farewell sweet" to the turbulence of society. It was not discontent, nor any undervaluing of general society, but the pure enthusiasm of the library, which once induced the studious Evelyn to sketch a retreat of this nature, which he addressed to his friend, the illustrious Boyle. He proposed to form "A college where persons of the same turn of mind might enjoy the pleasure of agreeable society, and at the same time pass their days without care or interruption."* This abandonment of their life to their genius has, indeed, often cost them too dear, from the days of Sophocles, who, ardent in his old age, neglected his family affairs, and was brought before his judges by his relations, as one fallen into a second childhood. The aged poet brought but one solitary witness in his favour—an unfinished tragedy; which having read, the judges rose before him, and retorted the charge on his accusers.

A parallel circumstance occurred to the Abbé Cotin, the victim of a rhyme of the satirical Boileau. Studious,

* This romantic literary retreat is one of those delightful reveries which the elegant taste of Evelyn abounded with. It may be found at full length in the fifth volume of Boyle's Works, not in the second, as the Biog. Brit. says. His lady was to live among the society. "If I and my wife take up two apartments, for we are to be decently asunder, however I stipulate, and her inclination will greatly suit with it, that shall be no impediment to the society, but a considerable advantage to the economic part," &c.

and without fortune, Cotin had lived contented till he incurred the unhappiness of inheriting a large estate. Then a world of cares opened on him; his rents were not paid, and his creditors increased. Dragged from his Hebrew and Greek, poor Cotin resolved to make over his entire fortune to one of his heirs, on condition of maintenance. His other relations assuming that a man who parted with his estate in his lifetime must necessarily be deranged, brought the learned Cotin into court. Cotin had nothing to say in his own favour, but requested his judges would allow him to address them from the sermons which he preached. The good sense, the sound reasoning, and the erudition of the preacher were such, that the whole bench unanimously declared that they themselves might be considered as madmen, were they to condemn a man of letters who was desirous of escaping from the incumbrance of a fortune which had only interrupted his studies.

There may then be sufficient motives to induce such a man to make a state of mediocrity his choice. If he lose his happiness, he mutilates his genius. Goldoni, with all the simplicity of his feelings and habits, in reviewing his life, tells us how he was always relapsing into his old propensity of comic writing; "but the thought of this does not disturb me," says he; "for though in any other situation I might have been in easier circumstances, I should never have been so happy." Bayle is a parent of the modern literary character; he pursued the same course, and early in life adopted the principle, "Neither to fear bad fortune nor have any ardent desires for good." Acquainted with the passions only as their historian, and living only for literature, he sacrificed to it the two great acquisitions of human pursuits—fortune and a family: but in what country had Bayle not a family and a possession in his fame? Hume and Gibbon had the most perfect conception of the literary character, and they

were aware of this important principle in its habits—"My own revenue," said Hume, "will be sufficient for a man of letters, who surely needs less money, both for his entertainment and credit, than other people." Gibbon observed of himself—"Perhaps the golden mediocrity of my fortune has contributed to fortify my application."

The state of poverty, then, desirable in the domestic life of genius, is one in which the cares of property never intrude, and the want of wealth is never perceived. This is not indigence; that state which, however dignified the man of genius himself may be, must inevitably degrade! for the heartless will gibe, and even the compassionate turn aside with contempt. This literary outcast will soon be forsaken even by himself! his own intellect will be clouded over, and his limbs shrink in the palsy of bodily misery and shame—

> Malesuada Fames, et turpis Egestas
> Terribiles visu formæ.

Not that in this history of men of genius we are without illustrious examples of those who have even *learnt to want*, that they might emancipate their genius from their necessities!

We see Rousseau rushing out of the palace of the financier, selling his watch, copying music by the sheet, and by the mechanical industry of two hours, purchasing ten for genius. We may smile at the enthusiasm of young Barry, who finding himself too constant a haunter of taverns, imagined that this expenditure of time was occasioned by having money; and to put an end to the conflict, he threw the little he possessed at once into the Liffey; but let us not forget that Barry, in the maturity of life, confidently began a labour of years,* and one of the noblest inventions in his art—a great poem in a pic-

* His series of pictures for the walls of the meeting-room of the Society of Arts in the Adelphi.—Ed.

ture—with no other resource than what he found by secret labours through the night, in furnishing the shops with those slight and saleable sketches which secured uninterrupted mornings for his genius. Spinosa, a name as celebrated, and perhaps as calumniated, as Epicurus, lived in all sorts of abstinence, even of honours, of pensions, and of presents; which, however disguised by kindness, he would not accept, so fearful was this philosopher of a chain! Lodging in a cottage and obtaining a livelihood by polishing optical glasses, he declared that he had never spent more than he earned, and certainly thought that there was such a thing as superfluous earnings. At his death his small accounts showed how he had subsisted on a few pence a-day, and

Enjoy'd, spare feast! a radish and an egg.

Poussin persisted in refusing a higher price than that affixed to the back of his pictures, at the time he was living without a domestic. The great oriental scholar, Anquetil de Perron, is a recent example of the literary character carrying his indifference to privations to the very cynicism of poverty; and he seems to exult over his destitution with the same pride as others would expatiate over their possessions. Yet we must not forget, to use the words of Lord Bacon, that "judging that means were to be spent upon learning, and not learning to be applied to means," De Perron refused the offer of thirty thousand livres for his copy of the "Zend-avesta." Writing to some Bramins, he describes his life at Paris to be much like their own. "I subsist on the produce of my literary labours without revenue, establishment, or place. I have no wife nor children; alone, absolutely free, but always the friend of men of probity. In a perpetual war with my senses, I triumph over the attractions of the world or I contemn them."

This ascetic existence is not singular. Parini, a great

modern poet of Italy, whom the Milanese point out to strangers as the glory of their city, lived in the same state of unrepining poverty. Mr. Hobhouse has given us this self-portrait of the poet:—

Me, non nato a percotere
Le dure illustri porte,
Nudo accorra, ma libero
Il regno della morte.

Naked, but free! A life of hard deprivations was long that of the illustrious Linnæus. Without fortune, to that great mind it never seemed necessary to acquire any. Peregrinating on foot with a stylus, a magnifying-glass, and a basket for plants, he shared the rustic meal of the peasant. Never was glory obtained at a cheaper rate! exclaims one of his eulogists. Satisfied with the least of the little, he only felt one perpetual want—that of completing his Flors. Not that Linnæus was insensible to his situation, for he gave his name to a little flower in Lapland—the *Linnæa Borealis*, from the fanciful analogy he discovered between its character and his own early fate, "a little northern plant flowering early, depressed, abject, and long overlooked." The want of fortune, however, did not deprive this man of genius of his true glory, nor of that statue raised to him in the gardens of the University of Upsal, nor of that solemn eulogy delivered by a crowned head, nor of those medals which his nation struck to commemorate the genius of the three kingdoms of nature!

This, then, is the race who have often smiled at the light regard of their good neighbours when contrasted with their own celebrity; for in poverty and in solitude such men are not separated from their fame; that is ever proceeding, ever raising a secret, but constant, triumph in their minds.*

* Spagnoletto, while sign-painting at Rome, attracted by his ability the notice of a cardinal, who ultimately gave him a home in his

Yes! Genius, undegraded and unexhausted, may indeed even in a garret glow in its career; but it must be on the principle which induced Rousseau solemnly to renounce writing "*par métier.*" This in the *Journal de Sçavans* he once attempted, but found himself quite inadequate to "the profession."* In a garret, the author of the "Studies of Nature," as he exultingly tells us, arranged his work. "It was in a little garret, in the new street of St. Etienne du Mont, where I resided four years, in the midst of physical and domestic afflictions. But there I enjoyed the most exquisite pleasures of my life, amid profound solitude and an enchanting horizon. There I put the finishing hand to my 'Studies of Nature,' and there I published them." Pope, one day taking his usual walk with Harte in the Haymarket, desired him to enter a little shop, where going up three pair of stairs into a small room, Pope said, "In this garret Addison wrote his 'Campaign!'" To the feelings of the poet this garret had become a consecrated spot; Genius seemed more itself, placed in contrast with its miserable locality!

The man of genius wrestling with oppressive fortune, who follows the avocations of an author as a precarious source of existence, should take as the model of the authorial life, that of Dr. Johnson. The dignity of the literary character was as deeply associated with his feelings, and the "reverence thyself" as present to his mind, when doomed to be one of the *Helots* of literature, by Osborn, Cave, and Miller, as when, in the honest triumph of Genius, he repelled a tardy adulation of the lordly Chesterfield. Destitute of this ennobling principle, the

palace; but the artist, feeling that his poverty was necessary to his industry and independence, fled to Naples, and recommenced a life of labour.—Ed.

* Twice he repeated this resolution. See his Works, vol. xxxi., p 283; vol. xxxii., p. 90.

author sinks into the tribe of those rabid adventurers of the pen who have masked the degraded form of the literary character under the assumed title of "authors by profession"*—the Guthries, the Ralphs, and the Amhursts.† There are worse evils for the literary man," says a living author, who himself is the true model of the great literary character, "than neglect, poverty, imprisonment, and death. There are even more pitiable objects than Chatterton himself with the poison at his lips." "I should die with hunger were I at peace with the world!" exclaimed a corsair of literature—and dashed his pen into the black flood before him of soot and gall.

In substituting fortune for the object of his designs, the man of genius deprives himself of those heats of inspiration reserved for him who lives for himself; the *mollia tempora fandi* of Art. If he be subservient to the public taste, without daring to raise it to his own, the creature of his times has not the choice of his subjects, which choice is itself a sort of invention. A task-worker ceases to think his own thoughts. The stipulated price and time are weighing on his pen or his pencil, while the hour-glass is dropping its hasty sands. If the man of genius would be wealthy and even luxurious, another fever besides the thirst of glory torments him. Such insatiable desires create many fears, and a mind in fear is a mind in slavery. In one of Shakspeare's sonnets he pathetically laments this compulsion of his necessities which forced him to the trade of pleasing the public; and he illustrates this degradation by a novel image. "Chide Fortune," cries the bard,—

* From an original letter which I have published from Guthrie to a minister of state, this modern phrase appears to have been his own invention. The principle unblushingly avowed, required the sanction of a respectable designation. I have preserved it in "Calamities of Authors."

† For some account of these men, see "Calamities of Authors."

> The guilty goddess of my harmless deeds,
> That did not better for my life provide
> Than public means which public manners breeds;
> Thence comes it that my name receives a brand;
> *And almost thence my nature is subdued*
> *To what it works in*, LIKE THE DYER'S HAND.

Such is the fate of that author, who, in his variety of task-works, blue, yellow, and red, lives without ever having shown his own natural complexion. We hear the eloquent truth from one who has alike shared in the bliss of composition, and the misery of its "daily bread." "A single hour of composition won from the business of the day, is worth more than the whole day's toil of him who works at the *trade of literature:* in the one case, the spirit comes joyfully to refresh itself, like a hart to the waterbrooks; in the other, it pursues its miserable way, panting and jaded, with the dogs of hunger and necessity behind."* We trace the fate of all task-work in the history of Poussin, when called on to reside at the French court. Labouring without intermission, sometimes on one thing and sometimes on another, and hurried on in things which required both time and thought, he saw too clearly the fatal tendency of such a life, and exclaimed, with ill-suppressed bitterness, "If I stay long in this country, I shall turn dauber like the rest here." The great artist abruptly returned to Rome to regain the possession of his own thoughts.

It has been a question with some, more indeed abroad than at home, whether the art of instructing mankind by the press would not be less suspicious in its character, were it less interested in one of its prevalent motives? Some noble self-denials of this kind are recorded. The principle of emolument will produce the industry which furnishes works for popular demand; but it is only the principle of honour which can produce the lasting works

* *Quarterly Review*, vol. viii., p. 538.

of genius. Boileau seems to censure Racine for having accepted money for one of his dramas, while he, who was not rich, gave away his polished poems to the public. He seems desirous of raising the art of writing to a more disinterested profession than any other, requiring no fees for the professors. Olivet presented his elaborate edition of Cicero to the world, requiring no other remuneration than its glory. Milton did not compose his immortal work for his trivial copyright;* and Linnæus sold his labours for a single ducat. The Abbé Mably, the author of many political and moral works, lived on little, and would accept only a few presentation copies from the booksellers. But, since we have become a nation of book-collectors, and since there exists, as Mr. Coleridge describes it, "a reading public," this principle of honour is altered. Wealthy and even noble authors are proud to receive the largest tribute to their genius, because this tribute is the certain evidence of the number who pay it. The property of a book, therefore, represents to the literary candidate the collective force of the thousands of voters on whose favour his claims can only exist. This change in the affairs of the literary republic in our country was felt by Gibbon, who has fixed on "the patronage of booksellers" as the standard of public opinion: "the measure of their liberality," he says, "is the least ambiguous test of our common success." The philosopher accepted it as a substitute for that "friendship or favour of princes, of which he could not boast." The same opinion was held by Johnson. Yet, looking on the present state of English literature, the most profuse

* The agreement made with Simmons, the publisher, was 5*l.* down, and 5*l.* more when 1500 copies were sold, the same sum to be paid for the second and third editions, each of the same number of copies. Milton only lived during the publication of two editions, and his widow parted with all her right in the work to the same bookseller for eight pounds. Her autograph receipt was in the possession of the late Dawson Turner.—Ed.

perhaps in Europe, we cannot refrain from thinking that the "patronage of booksellers" is frequently injurious to the great interests of literature.

The dealers in enormous speculative purchases are only subservient to the spirit of the times. If they are the purveyors, they are also the panders of public taste; and their vaunted patronage only extends to popular subjects; while their urgent demands are sure to produce hasty manufactures. A precious work on a recondite subject, which may have consumed the life of its author, no bookseller can patronise; and whenever such a work is published, the author has rarely survived the long season of the public's neglect. While popular works, after some few years of celebrity, have at length been discovered not worth the repairs nor the renewal of their lease of fame, the neglected work of a nobler design rises in value and rarity. The literary work which requires the greatest skill and difficulty, and the longest labour, is not commercially valued with that hasty, spurious novelty, for which the taste of the public is craving, from the strength of its disease rather than of its appetite. Rousseau observed, that his musical opera, the work of five or six weeks, brought him as much money as he had received for his "Emile," which had cost him twenty years of meditation, and three years of composition. This single fact represents a hundred. So fallacious are public opinion and the patronage of booksellers!

Such, then, is the inadequate remuneration of a life devoted to literature; and notwithstanding the more general interest excited by its productions within the last century, it has not essentially altered their situation in society; for who is deceived by the trivial exultation of the gay sparkling scribbler who lately assured us that authors now dip their pens in silver ink-standishes, and have a valet for an amanuensis? Fashionable writers must necessarily get out of fashion; it is the inevitable fate

of the material and the manufacturer. An eleemosynary fund can provide no permanent relief for the age and sorrows of the unhappy men of science and literature; and an author may even have composed a work which shall be read by the next generation as well as the present, and still be left in a state even of pauperism. These victims perish in silence! No one has attempted to suggest even a palliative for this great evil; and when I asked the greatest genius of our age to propose some relief for this general suffering, a sad and convulsive nod, a shrug that sympathised with the misery of so many brothers, and an avowal that even he could not invent one, was all that genius had to alleviate the forlorn state of the literary character.*

The only man of genius who has thrown out a hint for improving the situation of the literary man is Adam Smith. In that passage in his "Wealth of Nations" to which I have already referred, he says, that "Before the invention of the art of printing, the only employment by which a man of letters could make anything by his talents was that of a *public or a private teacher*, or by communicating to other people the various and useful knowledge which he had acquired himself; and this surely is a more honourable, a more useful, and in general even a more profitable employment than that other *of writing for a bookseller*, to which the art of printing has given occasion." We see the political economist, alike insensible to the dignity of the literary character, incapable of taking a just view of its glorious avocation. To obviate the personal wants attached to the occupations of an author, he would, more effectually than skilfully, get rid of authorship itself. This is not to restore the limb, but to amputate it. It is not the preservation of existence,

* It was the late Sir Walter Scott—if I could assign the *date* of this conversation, it would throw some light on what might be then passing in his own mind.

but its annihilation. His friends Hume and Robertson must have turned from this page humiliated and indignant. They could have supplied Adam Smith with a truer conception of the literary character, of its independence, its influence, and its glory.

I have projected a plan for the alleviation of the state of these authors who are not blessed with a patrimony. The *trade* connected with literature is carried on by men who are usually not literate, and the generality of the publishers of books, unlike all other tradesmen, are often the worst judges of their own wares. Were it practicable, as I believe it to be, that authors and men of letters could themselves be booksellers, the public would derive this immediate benefit from the scheme; a deluge of worthless or indifferent books would be turned away, and the name of the literary publisher would be a pledge for the value of every new book. Every literary man would choose his own favourite department, and we should learn from him as well as from his books.

Against this project it may be urged, that literary men are ill adapted to attend to the regular details of trade, and that the great capitalists in the book business have not been men of literature. But this plan is not suggested for accumulating a great fortune, or for the purpose of raising up a new class of tradesmen. It is not designed to make authors wealthy, for that would inevitably extinguish great literary exertion, but only to make them independent, as the best means to preserve exertion. The details of trade are not even to reach him. The poet Gesner, a bookseller, left his *librairie* to the care of his admirable wife. His own works, the elegant editions which issued from his press, and the value of manuscripts, were the objects of his attention.

On the Continent many of the dealers in books have been literary men. At the memorable expulsion of the French Protestants on the edict of Nantes, their expatria-

ted literary men flew to the shores of England, and the free provinces of Holland; and it was in Holland that this colony of *littérateurs* established magnificent printing-houses, and furnished Europe with editions of the native writers of France, often preferable to the originals, and even wrote the best works of that time. At that memorable period in our own history, when two thousand non-conformists were ejected on St. Bartholomew's day from the national establishment, the greater part were men of learning, who, deprived of their livings, were destitute of any means of existence. These scholars were compelled to look to some profitable occupation, and for the greater part they fixed on trades connected with literature; some became eminent booksellers, and continued to be voluminous writers, without finding their studies interrupted by their commercial arrangements. The details of trade must be left to others; the hand of a child can turn a vast machine, and the object here proposed would be lost, if authors sought to become merely booksellers.

Whenever the public of Europe shall witness such a new order of men among their booksellers, they will have less to read, but more to remember. Their opinions will be less fluctuating, and their knowledge will come to them with more maturity. Men of letters will fly to the house of the bookseller who in that class of literature in which he deals, will himself be not the least eminent member.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The matrimonial state of literature.—Matrimony said not to be well suited to the domestic life of genius.—Celibacy a concealed cause of the early querulousness of men of genius.—Of unhappy unions.—Not absolutely necessary that the wife should be a literary woman.—Of the docility and susceptibility of the higher female character.—A picture of a literary wife.

MATRIMONY has often been considered as a condition not well suited to the domestic life of genius, accompanied as it must be by many embarrassments for the head and the heart. It was an axiom with Fuessli, the Swiss artist, that the marriage state is incompatible with a high cultivation of the fine arts; and such appears to have been the feeling of most artists. When Michael Angelo was asked why he did not marry, he replied, "I have espoused my art; and it occasions me sufficient domestic cares, for my works shall be my children. What would Bartholomeo Ghiberti have been, had he not made the gates of St. John? His children consumed his fortune, but his gates, worthy to be the gates of Paradise, remain." The three Caraccis refused the conjugal bond on the same principle, dreading the interruptions of domestic life. Their crayons and paper were always on their dining-table. Careless of fortune, they determined never to hurry over their works in order that they might supply the ceaseless demands of a family. We discover the same principle operating in our own times. When a young painter, who had just married, told Sir Joshua that he was preparing to pursue his studies in Italy, that great painter exclaimed, "Married! then you are ruined as an artist!"

The same principle has influenced literary men. Sir Thomas Bodley had a smart altercation with his first librarian, insisting that he should not marry, maintaining

its absurdity in the man who had the perpetual care of a public library; and Woodward left as one of the express conditions of his lecturer, that he was not to be a married man. They imagined that their private affairs would interfere with their public duties. Peiresc, the great French collector, refused marriage, convinced that the cares of a family were too absorbing for the freedom necessary to literary pursuits, and claimed likewise a sacrifice of fortune incompatible with his great designs. Boyle, who would not suffer his studies to be interrupted by "household affairs," lived as a boarder with his sister, Lady Ranelagh. Newton, Locke, Leibnitz, Bayle, and Hobbes, and Hume, and Gibbon, and Adam Smith, decided for celibacy. These great authors placed their happiness in their celebrity.

This debate, for the present topic has sometimes warmed into one, is in truth ill adapted for controversy. The heart is more concerned in its issue than any espoused doctrine terminating in partial views. Look into the domestic annals of genius—observe the variety of positions into which the literary character is thrown in the nuptial state. Cynicism will not always obtain a sullen triumph, nor prudence always be allowed to calculate away some of the richer feelings of our nature. It is not an axiom that literary characters must necessarily institute a new order of celibacy. The sentence of the apostle pronounces that "the forbidding to marry is a doctrine of devils." Wesley, who published, "Thoughts on a Single Life," advised some "to remain single for the kingdom of heaven's sake; but the precept," he adds, "is not for the many." So indecisive have been the opinions of the most curious inquirers concerning the matrimonial state, whenever a great destination has engaged their consideration.

One position we may assume, that the studies, and even the happiness of the pursuits of men of genius, are

powerfully influenced by the domestic associate of their lives.

They rarely pass through the age of love without its passion. Even their Delias and their Amandas are often the shadows of some real object; for as Shakspeare's experience told him,

> Never durst poet touch a pen to write,
> Until his ink were temper'd with love's sighs.

Their imagination is perpetually colouring those pictures of domestic happiness on which they delight to dwell. He who is no husband sighs for that tenderness which is at once bestowed and received; and tears will start in the eyes of him who, in becoming a child among children, yet feels that he is no father! These deprivations have usually been the concealed cause of the querulous melancholy of the literary character.

Such was the real occasion of Shenstone's unhappiness. In early life he had been captivated by a young lady adapted to be both the muse and the wife of the poet, and their mutual sensibility lasted for some years. It lasted until she died. It was in parting from her that he first sketched his "Pastoral Ballad." Shenstone had the fortitude to refuse marriage. His spirit could not endure that she should participate in that life of self-privations to which he was doomed; but his heart was not locked up in the ice of celibacy, and his plaintive love songs, and elegies flowed from no fictitious source. "It is long since," said he, "I have considered myself as *undone*. The world will not perhaps consider me in that light entirely till I have married my maid."*

Thomson met a reciprocal passion in his Amanda, while the full tenderness of his heart was ever wasting itself like waters in a desert. As we have been made little ac-

* The melancholy tale of Shenstone's life is narrated in the third volume of "Curiosities of Literature."—Ed.

quainted with this part of the history of the poet of the "Seasons," I shall give his own description of those deep feelings from a manuscript letter written to Mallet. "To turn my eyes a softer way, to you know who—absence sighs it to me. What is my heart made of? a soft system of low nerves, too sensible for my quiet—capable of being very happy or very unhappy, I am afraid the last will prevail. Lay your hand upon a kindred heart, and despise me not. I know not what it is, but she dwells upon my thought in a mingled sentiment, which is the sweetest, the most intimately pleasing the soul can receive, and which I would wish never to want towards some dear object or another. To have always some secret darling idea to which one can still have recourse amidst the noise and nonsense of the world, and which never fails to touch us in the most exquisite manner, is an art of happiness that fortune cannot deprive us of. This may be called romantic; but whatever the cause is, the effect is really felt. Pray, when you write, tell me when you saw her, and with the pure eye of a friend, when you see her again, whisper that I am her most humble servant."

Even Pope was enamoured of a "scornful lady;" and, as Johnson observed, "polluted his will with female resentment." Johnson himself, we are told by one who knew him, "had always a metaphysical passion for one princess or other,—the rustic Lucy Porter, or the haughty Molly Aston, or the sublimated methodistic Hill Boothby; and, lastly, the more charming Mrs. Thrale." Even in his advanced age, at the height of his celebrity, we hear his cries of lonely wretchedness. "I want every comfort; my life is very solitary and very cheerless. Let me know that I have yet a friend—let us be kind to one another." But the "kindness" of distant friends is like the polar sun—too far removed to warm us. Those who have eluded the individual tenderness of the female, are

tortured by an aching void in their feelings. The stoic Akenside, in his "Odes," has preserved the history of a life of genius in a series of his own feelings. One entitled, "At Study," closes with these memorable lines:—

Me though no peculiar fair
Touches with a lover's care;
Though the pride of my desire
Asks immortal friendship's name,
Asks the palm of honest fame
And the old heroic lyre;
Though the day have smoothly gone,
Or to letter'd leisure known,
Or in social duty spent;
Yet at the eve my lonely breast
Seeks in vain for perfect rest,
Languishes for true content.

If ever a man of letters lived in a state of energy and excitement which might raise him above the atmosphere of social love, it was assuredly the enthusiast, Thomas Hollis, who, solely devoted to literature and to republicanism, was occupied in furnishing Europe and America with editions of his favourite authors. He would not marry, lest marriage should interrupt the labours of his platonic politics. But his extraordinary memoirs, while they show an intrepid mind in a robust frame, bear witness to the self-tormentor who had trodden down the natural bonds of domestic life. Hence the deep "dejection of his spirits;" those incessant cries, that he has "no one to advise, assist, or cherish those magnanimous pursuits in him." At length he retreated into the country, in utter hopelessness. "I go not into the country for attentions to agriculture as such, nor attentions of interest of any kind, which I have ever despised as such; but as a *used man*, to pass the remainder of a life in tolerable sanity and quiet, after having given up the flower of it, voluntarily, day, week, month, year after year, successive to each other, to public service, and being no longer able

to sustain, in *body or mind*, the labours that I have chosen to go through without falling speedily into *the greatest disorders*, and it might be *imbecility itself*. This is not colouring, but the exact plain truth."

> Poor moralist, and what art thou?
> A solitary fly!
> Thy joys no glittering female meets,
> No hive hast thou of hoarded sweets.

Assuredly it would not have been a question whether these literary characters should have married, had not Montaigne, when a widower, declared that "he would not marry a second time, though it were Wisdom itself;" but the airy Gascon has not disclosed how far *Madame* was concerned in this anathema.

If the literary man unite himself to a woman whose taste and whose temper are adverse to his pursuits, he must courageously prepare for a martyrdom. Should a female mathematician be united to a poet, it is probable that she would be left amidst her abstractions, to demonstrate to herself how many a specious diagram fails when brought into its mechanical operation; or discovering the infinite varieties of a curve, she might take occasion to deduce her husband's versatility. If she become as jealous of his books as other wives might be of his mistresses, she may act the virago even over his innocent papers. The wife of Bishop Cooper, while her husband was employed on his Lexicon, one day consigned the volume of many years to the flames, and obliged that scholar to begin a second siege of Troy in a second Lexicon. The wife of Whitelocke often destroyed his MSS., and the marks of her nails have come down to posterity in the numerous *lacerations* still gaping in his "Memorials." The learned Sir Henry Saville, who devoted more than half his life and nearly ten thousand pounds to his magnificent edition of St. Chrysostom, led a very uneasy life

between the saint and her ladyship. What with her tenderness for him, and her own want of amusement, St. Chrysostom, it appears, incurred more than one danger.

Genius has not preserved itself from the errors and infirmities of matrimonial connexions. The energetic character of Dante could neither soften nor control the asperity of his lady; and when that great poet lived in exile, she never cared to see him more, though he was the father of her six children. The internal state of the house of Domenichino afflicted that great artist with many sorrows. He had married a beauty of high birth and extreme haughtiness, and of the most avaricious disposition. When at Naples he himself dreaded lest the avaricious passion of his wife should not be able to resist the offers she received to poison him, and he was compelled to provide and dress his own food. It is believed that he died of poison. What a picture has Passeri left of the domestic interior of this great artist! *Così fra mille crepacuori morì uno de' più eccellenti artefici del mundo; che oltre al suo valore pittorico avrebbe più d'ogni altri maritato di viver sempre per l'onestà personale.* "So perished, amidst a thousand heart-breakings, the most excellent of artists; who besides his worth as a painter, deserved as much as any one to have lived for his excellence as a man."

Milton carried nothing of the greatness of his mind in the choice of his wives. His first wife was the object of sudden fancy. He left the metropolis and unexpectedly returned a married man, and united to a woman of such uncongenial dispositions, that the romp was frightened at the literary habits of the great poet, found his house solitary, beat his nephews, and ran away after a single month's residence! To this circumstance we owe his famous treatise on Divorce; and a party (by no means extinct), who having made as ill choices in their

wives, were for divorcing as fast as they had been for marrying, calling themselves *Miltonists*.

When we find that Molière, so skilful in human life, married a girl from his own troop, who made him experience all those bitter disgusts and ridiculous embarrassments which he himself played off at the theatre; that Addison's fine taste in morals and in life could suffer the ambition of a courtier to prevail with himself to seek a countess, whom he describes under the stormy character of Oceana, and who drove him contemptuously into solitude, and shortened his days; and that Steele, warm and thoughtless, was united to a cold precise "Miss Prue," as he himself calls her, and from whom he never parted without bickerings; in all these cases we censure the great men, not their wives.* Rousseau has honestly confessed his error. He had united himself to a low, illiterate woman; and when he retreated into solitude, he felt the weight which he carried with him. He laments that he had not educated his wife: "In a docile age, I could have adorned her mind with talents and knowledge, which would have more closely united us in retirement. We should not then have felt the intolerable tedium of a tête-à-tête; it is in solitude one feels the advantage of living with another who can think." Thus Rousseau confesses the fatal error, and indicates the right principle.

Yet it seems not absolutely necessary for the domestic happiness of the literary character, that his wife should be a literary woman. Tycho Brahe, noble by birth as well as genius, married the daughter of a peasant. By which means that great man obtained two points essential for his abstract pursuits; he acquired an obedient wife, and freed himself of his noble relatives, who would no longer hold an intercourse with the man who was spreading their family honours into more ages than perhaps

* See "Curiosities of Literature," for anecdotes of "Literary Wives."

they could have traced them backwards. The lady of Wieland was a pleasing domestic person, who, without reading her husband's works, knew he was a great poet. Wieland was apt to exercise his imagination in declamatory invectives and bitter amplifications; and the writer of this account, in perfect German taste, assures us, "that many of his felicities of diction were thus struck out at a heat." During this frequent operation of his genius, the placable temper of Mrs. Wieland overcame the orgasm of the German bard merely by persisting in her admiration and her patience. When the burst was over, Wieland himself was so charmed by her docility, that he usually closed with giving up all his opinions.

There is another sort of homely happiness, aptly described in the plain words of Bishop Newton. He found "the study of sacred and classic authors ill agreed with butchers' and bakers' bills;" and when the prospect of a bishopric opened on him, "more servants, more entertainments, a better table," &c., it became necessary to look out for "some clever, sensible woman to be his wife, who would lay out his money to the best advantage, and be careful and tender of his health; a friend and companion at all hours, and who would be happier in staying at home than be perpetually gadding abroad." Such are the wives not adapted to be the votaries, but who may be the faithful companions through life, even of a man of genius.

But in the character of the higher female we may discover a constitutional faculty of docility and enthusiasm which has varied with the genius of different ages. It is the opinion of an elegant metaphysician, that the mind of the female adopts and familiarises itself with ideas more easily than that of man, and hence the facility with which the sex contract or lose habits, and accommodate their minds to new situations. Politics, war, and learning, are

equally objects of attainment to their delightful susceptibility. Love has the fancied transparency of the cameleon. When the art of government directed the feelings of a woman, we behold Aspasia, eloquent with the genius of Pericles, instructing the Archons; Portia, the wife of the republican Brutus, devouring burning coals; and the wife of Lucan, transcribing and correcting the Pharsalia, before the bust of the poet, which she had placed on her bed, that his very figure might never be absent. When the universities were opened to the sex, they acquired academic glory. The wives of military men have shared in the perils of the field; or like Anna Comnena and our Mrs. Hutchinson, have become even their historians. In the age of love and sympathy, the female often receives an indelible pliancy from her literary associate. His pursuits become the objects of her thoughts, and he observes his own taste reflected in his family; much less through his own influence, for his solitary labours often preclude him from forming them, than by that image of his own genius—the mother of his children! The subjects, the very books which enter into his literary occupation, are cherished by her imagination; a feeling finely opened by the lady of the author of "Sandford and Merton:" "My ideas of my husband," she said, "are so much associated with his *books*, that to part with them would be as it were breaking some of the last ties which still connect me with so beloved an object. The being in the midst of books he has been accustomed to read, and which contain his *marks* and *notes*, will still give him *a sort of existence* with *me*. Unintelligible as such fond chimeras may appear to many people, I am persuaded they are not so to you."

With what simplicity Meta Mollers, the wife of Klopstock, in her German-English, describes to Richardson, the novelist, the manner in which she passes her day with her poet! she tells him that "she is always present

at the birth of the young verses, which begin by fragments, here and there, of a subject with which his soul is just then filled. Persons who live as we do have no need of two chambers; we are always in the same: I with my little work, still! still! only regarding sometimes my husband's face, which is so venerable at that time with tears of devotion, and all the sublimity of the subject—my husband reading me his young verses, and suffering my criticisms."

The picture of a literary wife of antiquity has descended to us, touched by the domestic pencil of genius, in the susceptible Calphurnia, the lady of the younger Pliny. "Her affection for me," he says, "has given her a turn to books: her passion will increase with our days, for it is not my youth or my person, which time gradually impairs, but my reputation and my glory, of which she is enamoured."

I have been told that Buffon, notwithstanding his favourite seclusion of his old tower in his garden, acknowledged to a friend that his lady had a considerable influence over his compositions: "Often," said he, "when I cannot please myself, and am impatient at the disappointment, Madame de Buffon reanimates my exertion, or withdraws me to repose for a short interval; I return to my pen refreshed, and aided by her advice."

Gesner declared that whatever were his talents, the person who had most contributed to develope them was his wife. She is unknown to the public; but the history of the mind of such a woman is discovered in the "Letters of Gesner and his Family." While Gesner gave himself up entirely to his favourite arts, drawing, painting, etching, and poetry, his wife would often reanimate a genius that was apt to despond in its attempts, and often exciting him to new productions, her sure and delicate taste was attentively consulted by the poet-painter—but she combined the most practical good sense

with the most feeling imagination. This forms the rareness of the character; for this same woman, who united with her husband in the education of their children, to relieve him from the interruptions of common business, carried on alone the concerns of his house in *la librairie.** Her correspondence with her son, a young artist travelling for his studies, opens what an old poet comprehensively terms "a gathered mind." Imagine a woman attending to the domestic economy, and to the commercial details, yet withdrawing out of this business of life into the more elevated pursuits of her husband, and at the same time combining with all this the cares and counsels which she bestowed on her son to form the artist and the man.

To know this incomparable woman we must hear her. "Consider your father's precepts as oracles of wisdom; they are the result of the experience he has collected, not only of life, but of that art which he has acquired simply by his own industry." She would not have her son suffer his strong affection to herself to absorb all other sentiments. "Had you remained at home, and been habituated under your mother's auspices to employments merely domestic, what advantage would you have acquired? I own we should have passed some delightful winter evenings together; but your love for the arts, and my ambition to see my sons as much distinguished for their talents as their virtues, would have been a constant source of regret at your passing your time in a manner so little worthy of you."

How profound is her observation on the strong but confined attachments of a youth of genius! "I have

* Gesner's father was a bookseller of Zurich; descended from a family of men learned in the exact sciences, he was apprenticed to a bookseller at Berlin, and afterwards entered into his father's business. The best edition of his "Idylls" is that published by himself, in two volumes, 4to, illustrated by his own engravings.—Ed.

frequently remarked, with some regret, the excessive attachment you indulge towards those who see and feel as you do yourself, and the total neglect with which you seem to treat every one else. I should reproach a man with such a fault who was destined to pass his life in a small and unvarying circle; but in an artist, who has a great object in view, and whose country is the whole world, this disposition seems to be likely to produce a great number of inconveniences. Alas! my son, the life you have hitherto led in your father's house has been in fact a pastoral life, and not such a one as was necessary for the education of a man whose destiny summons him to the world."

And when her son, after meditating on some of the most glorious productions of art, felt himself, as he says, "disheartened and cast down at the unattainable superiority of the artist, and that it was only by reflecting on the immense labour and continued efforts which such masterpieces must have required, that I regained my courage and my ardour," she observes, "This passage, my dear son, is to me as precious as gold, and I send it to you again, because I wish you to impress it strongly on your mind. The remembrance of this may also be a useful preservative from too great confidence in your abilities, to which a warm imagination may sometimes be liable, or from the despondence you might occasionally feel from the contemplation of grand originals. Continue, therefore, my dear son, to form a sound judgment and a pure taste from your own observations; your mind, while yet young and flexible, may receive whatever impressions you wish. Be careful that your abilities do not inspire in you too much confidence, lest it should happen to you as it has to many others, that they have never possessed any greater merit than that of having good abilities."

One more extract, to preserve an incident which may,

touch the heart of genius. This extraordinary woman, whose characteristic is that of strong sense combined with delicacy of feeling, would check her German sentimentality at the moment she was betraying those emotions in which the imagination is so powerfully mixed up with the associated feelings. Arriving at their cottage at Sihlwald, she proceeds—"On entering the parlour three small pictures, painted by you, met my eyes. I passed some time in contemplating them. It is now a year, I thought, since I saw him trace these pleasing forms; he whistled and sang, and I saw them grow under his pencil; now he is far, far from us. In short, I had the weakness to press my lips on one of these pictures. You well know, my dear son, that I am not much addicted to scenes of a sentimental turn; but to-day, while I considered your works, I could not restrain this little impulse of maternal feelings. Do not, however, be apprehensive that the tender affection of a mother will ever lead me too far, or that I shall suffer my mind to be too powerfully impressed with the painful sensations to which your absence gives birth. My reason convinces me that it is for your welfare that you are now in a place where your abilities will have opportunities of unfolding, and where you can become great in your art."

Such was the incomparable wife and mother of the Gesners! Will it now be a question whether matrimony be incompatible with the cultivation of the arts? A wife who reanimates the drooping genius of her husband, and a mother who is inspired by the ambition of beholding her sons eminent, is she not the real being which the ancients personified in their Muse?

CHAPTER XIX.

Literary friendships.—In early life.—Different from those of men of the world.—They suffer an unrestrained communication of their ideas, and bear reprimands and exhortations.—Unity of feelings.—A sympathy not of manners but of feelings.—Admit of dissimilar characters.—Their peculiar glory.—Their sorrow.

AMONG the virtues which literature inspires, is often that of the most romantic friendship. The delirium of love, and even its lighter caprices, are incompatible with the pursuits of the student; but to feel friendship like a passion is necessary to the mind of genius alternately elated and depressed, ever prodigal of feeling and excursive in knowledge.

The qualities which constitute literary friendship, compared with those of men of the world, must render it a sentiment as rare as love itself, which it resembles in that intellectual tenderness in which both so deeply participate.

Born "in the dews of their youth," this friendship will not expire on their tomb. In the school or the college this immortality begins; and, engaged in similar studies, should even one excel the other, he will find in him the protector of his fame; as Addison did in Steele, West in Gray, and Gray in Mason. Thus Petrarch was the guide of Boccaccio, thus Boccaccio became the defender of his master's genius. Perhaps friendship is never more intense than in an intercourse of minds of ready counsels and inspiring ardours. United in the same pursuits, but directed by an unequal experience, the imperceptible superiority interests, without mortifying. It is a counsel, it is an aid; in whatever form it shows itself, it has nothing of the malice of rivalry.

A beautiful picture of such a friendship among men of

genius offers itself in the history of Mignard, the great French painter, and Du Fresnoy, the great critic of the art itself. Du Fresnoy, abandoned in utter scorn by his stern father, an apothecary, for his entire devotion to his seductive art, lived at Rome in voluntary poverty, till Mignard, his old fellow-student, arrived, when they became known by the name of "the inseparables." The talents of the friends were different, but their studies were the same. Their days melted away together in drawing from the ancient statues and the basso-relievos, in studying in the galleries of paintings, or among the villas which embellish the environs of Rome. One roof sheltered them, and one table supplied their sober meal. Light were the slumbers which closed each day, each the pleasing image of the former. But this remarkable friendship was not a simple sentiment which limited the views of "the Inseparables," for with them it was a perpetual source of mutual usefulness. They gave accounts to each other of whatever they observed, and carefully noted their own defects. Du Fresnoy, so critical in the theory of the art, was unsuccessful in the practical parts. His delight in poetical composition had retarded the progress of his pictorial powers. Not having been taught the handling of his pencil, he worked with difficulty; but Mignard succeeded in giving him a freer command and a more skilful touch; while Du Fresnoy, who was the more literary man, enriched the invention of Mignard by reading to him an Ode of Anacreon or Horace, a passage from the Iliad or Odyssey, or the Æneid, or the Jerusalem Delivered, which offered subjects for the artist's invention, who would throw out five or six different sketches on the same subject; a habit which so highly improved the inventive powers of Mignard, that he could compose a fine picture with playful facility. Thus they lived together, mutually enlightening each other. Mignard supplied Du Fresnoy with all that fortune had

refused him; and when he was no more, perpetuated his fame, which he felt was a portion of his own celebrity, by publishing his posthumous poem, *De Arte Graphica;** a poem, which Mason has made readable by his versification, and Reynolds even interesting by his invaluable commentary.

In the poem Cowley composed, on the death of his friend Harvey, this stanza opens a pleasing scene of two young literary friends engaged in their midnight studies:

> Say, for you saw us, ye immortal lights!
> How oft unwearied have we spent the nights,
> Till the Ledæan stars, so famed for love,
> Wonder'd at us from above.
> We spent them not in toys, in lust, or wine;
> But search of deep philosophy,
> Wit, eloquence, and poetry;
> Arts which I loved, for they, my friend, were thine.

Touched by a personal knowledge of this union of genius and affection, even Malone commemorates, with unusual warmth, the literary friendships of Sir Joshua Reynolds; and with a felicity of fancy, not often indulged, has raised an unforced parallel between the bland wisdom of Sir Joshua and the "mitis sapientia Lælî." "What the illustrious Scipio was to Lælius was the all-knowing and all-accomplished Burke to Reynolds;" and what the elegant Lælius was to his master Panætius, whom he gratefully protected, and to his companion the poet Lucilius, whom he patronised, was Reynolds to Johnson, of whom he was the scholar and friend, and to Goldsmith, whom he loved and aided.†

* La Vie de Pierre Mignard, par L'Abbé de Monville, the work of an amateur.

† Reynolds's hospitality was unbounded to all literary men, and his evenings were devoted to their society. It was at his house they compared notes; and the President of the Royal Academy obtained that information which gave him a full knowledge of the outward world, which his ceaseless occupation could not else have allowed.—Ed.

Count Azara mourns with equal tenderness and force over the memory of the artist and the writer Mengs. "The most tender friendship would call forth tears in this sad duty of scattering flowers on his tomb; but the shade of my extinct friend warns me not to be satisfied with dropping flowers and tears—they are useless; and I would rather accomplish his wishes, in making known the author and his works."

I am infinitely delighted by a circumstance communicated to me by one who had visited Gleim, the German poet, who seems to have been a creature made up altogether of sensibility. His many and illustrious friends he had never forgotten, and to the last hour of a life, prolonged beyond his eightieth year, he possessed those interior feelings which can make even an old man an enthusiast. There seemed for Gleim to be no extinction in friendship when the friend was no more; and he had invented a singular mode of gratifying his feelings of literary friendships. The visitor found the old man in a room of which the wainscot was panelled, as we still see among us in ancient houses. In every panel Gleim had inserted the portrait of a friend, and the apartment was crowded. "You see," said the grey-haired poet, "that I never have lost a friend, and am sitting always among them."

Such friendship can never be the lot of men of the world; for the source of these lies in the interior affections and the intellectual feelings. Fontenelle describes with characteristic delicacy the conversations of such literary friends: "Our days passed like moments; thanks to those pleasures, which, however, are not included in those which are commonly called pleasures." The friendships of the men of society move on the principle of personal interest, but interest can easily separate the interested; or they are cherished to relieve themselves from the listlessness of existence; but, as weariness is conta-

gious, the contact of the propagator is watched. Men of the world may look on each other with the same countenances, but not with the same hearts. In the common mart of life intimacies may be found which terminate in complaint and contempt; the more they know one another, the less is their mutual esteem: the feeble mind quarrels with one still more imbecile than itself; the dissolute riot with the dissolute, and they despise their companions, while they too have themselves become despicable.

Literary friendships are marked by another peculiarity; the true philosophical spirit has learned to bear that shock of contrary opinions which minds less meditative are unequal to encounter. Men of genius live in the unrestrained communication of their ideas, and confide even their caprices with a freedom which sometimes startles ordinary observers. We see literary men, the most opposite in dispositions and opinions, deriving from each other that fulness of knowledge which unfolds the certain, the probable, the doubtful. Topics which break the world into factions and sects, and truths which ordinary men are doomed only to hear from a malignant adversary, they gather from a friend! If neither yields up his opinions to the other, they are at least certain of silence and a hearing; but usually

> The wise new wisdom from the wise acquire.

This generous freedom, which spares neither reprimands nor exhortation, has often occurred in the intercourse of literary men. Hume and Robertson were engaged in the same studies, but with very opposite principles; yet Robertson declined writing the English history, which he aspired to do, lest it should injure the plans of Hume; a noble sacrifice!

Politics once divided Boccaccio and Petrarch. The poet of Valchiusa had never forgiven the Florentines for

their persecution of his father. By the mediation of Boccaccio they now offered to reinstate Petrarch in his patrimony and his honours. Won over by the tender solicitude of his friend, Petrarch had consented to return to his country; but with his usual inconstancy of temper, he had again excused himself to the senate of Florence, and again retreated to his solitude. Nor was this all; for the Visconti of Milan had by their flattery and promises seduced Petrarch to their court; a court, the avowed enemy of Florence. Boccaccio, for the honour of literature, of his friend, of his country, indignantly heard of Petrarch's fatal decision, and addressed him by a letter—the most interesting perhaps which ever passed between two literary friends, who were torn asunder by the momentary passions of the vulgar, but who were still united by that immortal friendship which literature inspires, and by a reverence for that posterity which they knew would concern itself with their affairs.

It was on a journey to Ravenna that Boccaccio first heard the news of Petrarch's abandonment of his country, when he thus vehemently addressed his brother-genius:—

"I would be silent, but I cannot: my reverence commands silence, but my indignation speaks. How has it happened that Silvanus (under this name he conceals Petrarch) has forgotten his dignity, the many conversations we had together on the state of Italy, his hatred of the archbishop (Visconti), his love of solitude and freedom, so necessary for study, and has resolved to imprison the Muses at that court? Whom may we trust again, if Silvanus, who once branded *Il Visconti* as the Cruel, a Polyphemus, a Cyclop, has avowed himself his friend, and placed his neck under the yoke of him whose audacity, and pride, and tyranny, he so deeply abhorred? How has Visconti obtained that which King Robert, which the pontiff, the emperor, the King of France, could not?

Am I to conclude that you accepted this favour from a disdain of your fellow-citizens, who once indeed scorned you, but who have reinstated you in the paternal patrimony of which you have been deprived? I do not disapprove of a just indignation; but I take Heaven to witness that I believe that no man, whoever he may be, rightly and honestly can labour against his country, whatever be the injury he has received. You will gain nothing by opposing me in this opinion; for if stirred up by the most just indignation you become the friend of the enemy of your country, unquestionably you will not spur him on to war, nor assist him by your arm, nor by your counsel; yet how can you avoid rejoicing with him, when you hear of the ruins, the conflagrations, the imprisonments, death, and rapine, which he shall spread among us?"

Such was the bold appeal to elevated feelings, and such the keen reproach inspired by that confidential freedom which can only exist in the intercourse of great minds. The literary friendship, or rather adoration of Boccaccio for Petrarch, was not bartered at the cost of his patriotism: and it is worthy of our notice that Petrarch, whose personal injuries from an ungenerous republic were rankling in his mind, and whom even the eloquence of Boccaccio could not disunite from his protector Visconti, yet received the ardent reproaches of his friend without anger, though not without maintaining the freedom of his own opinions. Petrarch replied, that the anxiety of Boccaccio for the liberty of his friend was a thought most grateful to him; but he assured Boccaccio that he preserved his freedom, even although it appeared that he bowed under a hard yoke. He hoped that he had not to learn to serve in his old age, he who had hitherto studied to preserve his independence; but, in respect to servitude, he did not know whom it was most displeasing to serve,

a tyrant like Visconti, or with Boccaccio, a people of tyrants.*

The unity of feeling is displayed in such memorable associates as Beaumont and Fletcher; whose labours are so combined, that no critic can detect the mingled production of either; and whose lives are so closely united, that no biographer can compose the memoirs of the one without running into the history of the other. Their days were interwoven as their verses. Montaigne and Charron, in the eyes of posterity, are rivals; but such literary friendship knows no rivalry. Such was Montaigne's affection for Charron, that he requested him by his will to bear the arms of the Montaignes; and Charron evinced his gratitude to the manes of his departed friend, by leaving his fortune to the sister of Montaigne.

How pathetically Erasmus mourns over the death of his beloved Sir Thomas More!—"*In Moro mihi videor extinctus*"—"I seem to see myself extinct in More." It was a melancholy presage of his own death, which shortly after followed. The Doric sweetness and simplicity of old Isaac Walton, the angler, were reflected in a mind as clear and generous, when Charles Cotton continued the feelings, rather than the little work of Walton. Metastasio and Farinelli called each other *il Gemello*, the Twin: and both delighted to trace the resemblance of their lives and fates, and the perpetual alliance of the verse and the voice. The famous John Baptista Porta had a love of the mysterious parts of sciences, such as physiognomy, natural magic, the cryptical arts of writing, and projected many curious inventions which astonished his age, and which we have carried to perfection. This extraordinary man saw his fame somewhat diminishing by a rumour that his brother John Vincent had a great share in the composition of his works; but this never

* These interesting letters are preserved in Count Baldelli's "Life of Boccaccio," p. 115.

disturbed him; and Peiresc, in an interesting account of a visit to this celebrated Neapolitan, observed, that though now now aged and grey-haired, he treated his younger brother as a son. These single-hearted brothers, who would not marry that they might never be separated, knew of but one fame, and that was the fame of Porta.

Goguet, the author of "The Origin of the Arts and Sciences," bequeathed his MSS. and his books to his friend Fugere, with whom he had long united his affections and his studies, that his surviving friend might proceed with them: but the author had died of a slow and painful disorder, which Fugere had watched by his side, in silent despair. The sight of those MSS. and books was the friend's death-stroke; half his soul, which had once given them animation, was parted from him, and a few weeks terminated his own days. When Lloyd heard of the death of Churchill, he neither wished to survive him, nor did.* The Abbé de St. Pierre gave an interesting proof of literary friendship for Varignon, the geometrician. They were of congenial dispositions, and St. Pierre, when he went to Paris, could not endure to part with Varignon, who was too poor to accompany him; and St. Pierre was not rich. A certain income, however moderate, was necessary for the tranquil pursuits of geometry. St. Pierre presented Varignon with a portion of his small income, accompanied by that delicacy of feeling which men of genius who know each other can best conceive: "I do not give it you," said St. Pierre, "as a salary

* This event is thus told by Southey: "The news of Churchill's death was somewhat abruptly announced to Lloyd as he sat at dinner; he was seized with a sudden sickness, and saying, 'I shall follow poor Charles,' took to his bed, from which he never rose again; dying, if ever man died, of a broken heart. The tragedy did not end here: Churchill's favourite sister, who is said to have possessed much of her brother's sense, and spirit, and genius, and to have been betrothed to Lloyd, attended him during his illness, and sinking under the double loss, soon followed her brother and her lover to the grave."—Ed.

but as an annuity, that you may be independent and quit me when you dislike me." The same circumstance occurred between Akenside and Dyson. Dyson, when the poet was in great danger of adding one more illustrious name to the "Calamities of Authors," interposed between him and ill-fortune, by allowing him an annuity of three hundred a-year; and, when he found the fame of his literary friend attacked, although not in the habit of composition, he published a defence of his poetical and philosophical character. The name and character of Dyson have been suffered to die away, without a single tribute of even biographical sympathy; as that of Longueville, the modest patron of Butler, in whom that great political satirist found what the careless ingratitude of a court had denied: but in the record of literary glory, the patron's name should be inscribed by the side of the literary character: for the public incurs an obligation whenever a man of genius is protected.

The statesman Fouquet, deserted by all others, witnessed La Fontaine hastening every literary man to his prison-gate. Many have inscribed their works to their disgraced patrons, as Pope did so nobly to the Earl of Oxford in the Tower:

> When interest calls off all her sneaking train,
> And all the obliged desert, and all the vain,
> They wait, or to the scaffold, or the cell,
> When the last lingering friend has bid farewell.

Literary friendship is a sympathy not of manners, but of feelings. The personal character may happen to be very opposite: the vivacious may be loved by the melancholic, and the wit by the man of learning. He who is vehement and vigorous will feel himself a double man by the side of the friend who is calm and subtle. When we observe such friendships, we are apt to imagine that they are not real because the characters are dissimilar; but it is their common tastes and pursuits which form a

bond of union. Pomponius Lætus, so called from his natural good-humour, was the personal friend of Hermolaus Barbarus, whose saturnine and melancholy disposition he often exhilarated; the warm, impetuous Luther was the beloved friend of the mild and amiable Melancthon; the caustic Boileau was the companion of Racine and Molière; and France, perhaps, owes the *chefs-d'œuvre* of her tragic and her comic poet to her satirist. The delicate taste and the refining ingenuity of Hurd only attached him the more to the impetuous and dogmatic Warburton.* No men could be more opposite in personal character than the careless, gay, and hasty Steele, and the cautious, serious, and the elegant Addison; yet no literary friendship was more fortunate than their union.

One glory is reserved for literary friendship. The friendship of a great name indicates the greatness of the character who appeals to it. When Sydenham mentioned, as a proof of the excellence of his method of treating acute diseases, that it had received the approbation of his illustrious friend Locke, the philosopher's opinion contributed to the physician's success.

Such have been the friendships of great literary characters; but too true it is, that they have not always contributed thus largely to their mutual happiness. The querulous lament of Gleim to Klopstock is too generally participated. As Gleim lay on his death-bed he addressed the great bard of Germany—"I am dying, dear Klopstock; and, as a dying man will I say, in this world we have not lived long enough together and for each other; but in vain would we now recal the past!" What tenderness in the reproach! What self-accusation in its modesty!

* For a full account of their literary career see the first article in "Quarrels of Authors."

CHAPTER XX.

The literary and the personal character.—The personal dispositions of an author may be the reverse of those which appear in his writings.—Erroneous conceptions of the character of distant authors.—Paradoxical appearances in the history of Genius.—Why the character of the man may be opposite to that of his writings.

ARE the personal dispositions of an author discoverable in his writings, as those of an artist are imagined to appear in his works, where Michael Angelo is always great, and Raphael ever graceful?

Is the moralist a moral man? Is he malignant who publishes caustic satires? Is he a libertine who composes loose poems? And is he, whose imagination delights in terror and in blood, the very monster he paints?

Many licentious writers have led chaste lives. La Mothe le Vayer wrote two works of a free nature; yet his was the unblemished life of a retired sage. Bayle is the too faithful compiler of impurities, but he resisted the voluptuousness of the senses as much as Newton. La Fontaine wrote tales fertile in intrigue, yet the "bonhomme" has not left on record a single ingenious amour of his own. The Queen of Navarre's Tales are gross imitations of Boccaccio's; but she herself was a princess of irreproachable habits, and had given proof of the most rigid virtue; but stories of intrigues, told in a natural style, formed the fashionable literature of the day, and the genius of the female writer was amused in becoming an historian without being an actor. Fortiguerra, the author of the Ricciardetto, abounds with loose and licentious descriptions, and yet neither his manners nor his personal character were stained by the offending freedom of his inventions. Smollett's character is immaculate; yet he has described two scenes which offend even in the

license of imagination. Cowley, who boasts with such gaiety of the versatility of his passion among so many mistresses, wanted even the confidence to address one. Thus, licentious writers may be very chaste persons. The imagination may be a volcano while the heart is an Alp of ice.

Turn to the moralist—there we find Seneca, a usurer of seven millions, writing on moderate desires on a table of gold. Sallust, who so eloquently declaims against the licentiousness of the age, was repeatedly accused in the senate of public and habitual debaucheries; and when this inveigher against the spoilers of provinces attained to a remote government, he pillaged like Verres. That "Demosthenes was more capable of recommending than of imitating the virtues of our ancestors," is the observation of Plutarch. Lucian, when young, declaimed against the friendship of the great, as another name for servitude; but when his talents procured him a situation under the emperor, he facetiously compared himself to those quacks who, themselves plagued by a perpetual cough, offer to sell an infallible remedy for one. Sir Thomas More, in his "Utopia," declares that no man ought to be punished for his religion; yet he became a fierce persecutor, flogging and racking men for his own "true faith." At the moment the poet Rousseau was giving versions of the Psalms, full of unction, as our Catholic neighbours express it, he was profaning the same pen with infamous epigrams; and an erotic poet of our times has composed night-hymns in churchyards with the same ardour with which he poured forth Anacreontics. Napoleon said of Bernardin St. Pierre, whose writings breathe the warm principles of humanity and social happiness in every page, that he was one of the worst private characters in France. I have heard this from other quarters; it startles one! The pathetic genius of Sterne played about his head, but never reached his heart.* Cardinal Richelieu

* See what is said on this subject in the article on Sterne in the "Literary Miscellanies," of the present volume.

wrote "The Perfection of a Christian, or the Life of a Christian;" yet was he an utter stranger to Gospel maxims; and Frederick the Great, when young, published his "Anti-Machiavel," and deceived the world by the promise of a pacific reign. This military genius protested against those political arts which he afterwards adroitly practised, uniting the lion's head with the fox's tail—and thus himself realising the political monster of Machiavel!

And thus also is it with the personal dispositions of an author, which may be quite the reverse from those which appear in his writings. Johnson would not believe that Horace was a happy man because his verses were cheerful, any more than he could think Pope so, because the poet is continually informing us of it. It surprised Spence when Pope told him that Rowe, the tragic poet, whom he had considered so solemn a personage, "would laugh all day long, and do nothing else but laugh." Lord Kaimes says, that Arbuthnot must have been a great genius, for he exceeded Swift and Addison in humorous painting; although we are informed he had nothing of that peculiarity in his character. Young, who is constantly contemning preferment in his writings, was all his life pining after it; and the conversation of the sombrous author of the "Night Thoughts" was of the most volatile kind, abounding with trivial puns. He was one of the first who subscribed to the assembly at Wellwyn. Mrs. Carter, who greatly admired his sublime poetry, expressing her surprise at his social converse, he replied, "Madam, there is much difference between writing and talking."

Molière, on the contrary, whose humour is so perfectly comic, and even ludicrous, was thoughtful and serious, and even melancholy. His strongly-featured physiognomy exhibits the face of a great tragic, rather than of a great comic, poet. Boileau called Molière "The Contemplative Man." Those who make the world laugh often

themselves laugh the least. A famous and witty harlequin of France was overcome with hypochondriasm, and consulted a physician, who, after inquiring about his malady, told his miserable patient, that he knew of no other medicine for him than to take frequent doses of Carlin.—"I am Carlin himself," exclaimed the melancholy man, in despair. Burton, the pleasant and vivacious author of "The Anatomy of Melancholy," of whom it is noticed, that he could in an interval of vapours raise laughter in any company, in his chamber was "mute and mopish," and at last was so overcome by that intellectual disorder, which he appeared to have got rid of by writing his volume, that it is believed he closed his life in a fit of melancholy.*

Could one have imagined that the brilliant wit, the luxuriant raillery, and the fine and deep sense of Pascal, could have combined with the most opposite qualities—the hypochondriasm and bigotry of an ascetic? Rochefoucauld, in private life, was a conspicuous example of all those moral qualities of which he seemed to deny the existence, and exhibited in this respect a striking contrast to the Cardinal de Retz, who has presumed to censure him for his want of faith in the reality of virtue; but De Retz himself was the unbeliever in disinterested virtue. This great genius was one of those pretended patriots destitute of a single one of the virtues for which he was the clamorous advocate of faction.

When Valincour attributed the excessive tenderness in the tragedies of Racine to the poet's own impassioned character, the son amply showed that his father was by no means the slave of love. Racine never wrote a single love-poem, nor even had a mistress; and his wife had never read his tragedies, for poetry was not her delight.

* It is reported of him that his only mode of alleviating his melancholy was by walking from his college at Oxford to the bridge, to listen to the rough jokes of the bargemen.

Racine's motive for making love the constant source of action in his tragedies, was from the principle which has influenced so many poets, who usually conform to the prevalent taste of the times. In the court of a young monarch it was necessary that heroes should be lovers; Corneille had nobly run in one career, and Racine could not have existed as a great poet had he not rivalled him in an opposite one. The tender Racine was no lover; but he was a subtle and epigrammatic observer, before whom his convivial friends never cared to open their minds; and the caustic Boileau truly said of him, "Racine is far more malicious than I am."

Alfieri speaks of his mistress as if he lived with her in the most unreserved familiarity; the reverse was the case. And the gratitude and affection with which he describes his mother, and which she deserved, entered so little into his habitual feelings, that, after their early separation, he never saw her but once, though he often passed through the country where she resided.

Johnson has composed a beautiful Rambler, describing the pleasures which result from the influence of good-humour; and somewhat remarkably says, "Without good-humour, learning and bravery can be only formidable, and confer that superiority which swells the heart of the lion in the desert, where he roars without reply, and ravages without resistance." He who could so finely discover the happy influence of this pleasing quality was himself a stranger to it, and "the roar and the ravage" were familiar to our lion. Men of genius frequently substitute their beautiful imagination for spontaneous and natural sentiment. It is not therefore surprising if we are often erroneous in the conception we form of the personal character of a distant author. Klopstock, the votary of the muse of Zion, so astonished and warmed the sage Bodmer, that he invited the inspired bard to his house: but his visitor shocked the grave professor, when,

instead of a poet rapt in silent meditation, a volatile youth leaped out of the chaise, who was an enthusiast for retirement only when writing verses. An artist, whose pictures exhibit a series of scenes of domestic tenderness, awakening all the charities of private life, I have heard, participated in them in no other way than on his canvas. Evelyn, who has written in favour of active life, "loved and lived in retirement;"* while Sir George Mackenzie, who had been continually in the bustle of business, framed a eulogium on solitude. We see in Machiavel's code of tyranny, of depravity, and of criminal violence, a horrid picture of human nature; but this retired philosopher was a friend to the freedom of his country; he participated in none of the crimes he had recorded, but drew up these systemized crimes "as an observer, not as a criminal." Drummond, whose sonnets still retain the beauty and the sweetness and the delicacy of the most amiable imagination, was a man of a harsh irritable temper, and has been thus characterised:—

Testie Drummond could not speak for fretting.

Thus authors and artists may yield no certain indication of their personal characters in their works. Inconstant men will write on constancy, and licentious minds may elevate themselves into poetry and piety. We should be unjust to some of the greatest geniuses if the

* Since this was written the correspondence of Evelyn has appeared, by which we find that he apologised to Cowley for having published this very treatise, which seemed to condemn that life of study and privacy to which they were both equally attached; and confesses that the whole must be considered as a mere sportive effusion, requesting that Cowley would not suppose its principles formed his private opinions. Thus Leibnitz, we are told, laughed at the fanciful system revealed in his *Theodicée*, and acknowledged that he never wrote it in earnest; that a philosopher is not always obliged to write seriously, and that to invent an hypothesis is only a proof of the force of imagination.

extraordinary sentiments which they put into the mouths of their dramatic personages are maliciously to be applied to themselves. Euripides was accused of atheism when he introduced a denier of the gods on the stage. Milton has been censured by Clarke for the impiety of Satan; and an enemy of Shakspeare might have reproached him for his perfect delineation of the accomplished villain Iago, as it was said that Dr. Moore was hurt in the opinions of some by his odious Zeluco. Crebillon complains of this:—"They charge me with all the iniquities of Atreus, and they consider me in some places as a wretch with whom it is unfit to associate; as if all which the mind invents must be derived from the heart." This poet offers a striking instance of the little alliance existing between the literary and personal dispositions of an author. Crebillon, who exulted, on his entrance into the French Academy, that he had never tinged his pen with the gall of satire, delighted to strike on the most harrowing string of the tragic lyre. In his *Atreus* the father drinks the blood of his son; in his *Rhadamistus* the son expires under the hand of the father; in his *Electra* the son assassinates the mother. A poet is a painter of the soul, but a great artist is not therefore a bad man.

Montaigne appears to have been sensible of this fact in the literary character. Of authors, he says, he likes to read their little anecdotes and private passions:—"Car j'ai une singulière curiosité de connaître l'âme et les naïfs jugemens de mes auteurs. Il faut bien juger leur suffisance, mais non pas leurs mœurs, ni eux, par cette montre de leurs écrits qu'ils étalent au théâtre du monde." Which may be thus translated: "For I have a singular curiosity to know the soul and simple opinions of my authors. We must judge of their ability, but not of their manners, nor of themselves, by that show of their writings which they display on the theatre of the world." This is very just; are we yet sure, however, that the

simplicity of this old favourite of Europe might not have been as much a theatrical gesture as the sentimentality of Sterne? The great authors of the Port-Royal Logic have raised severe objections to prove that Montaigne was not quite so open in respect to those simple details which he imagined might diminish his personal importance with his readers. He pretends that he reveals all his infirmities and weaknesses, while he is perpetually passing himself off for something more than he is. He carefully informs us that he has "a page," the usual attendant of an independent gentleman, and lives in an old family château; when the fact was, that his whole revenue did not exceed six thousand livres, a state beneath mediocrity. He is also equally careful not to drop any mention of his having a *clerk with a bag;* for he was a counsellor of Bordeaux, but affected the gentleman and the soldier. He trumpets himself forth for having been *mayor* of Bordeaux, as this offered an opportunity of telling us that he succeeded *Marshal* Biron, and resigned it to *Marshal* Matignon. Could he have discovered that any *marshal* had been a *lawyer* he would not have sunk that part of his life. Montaigne himself has said, "that in forming a judgment of a man's life, particular regard should be paid to his behaviour at the end of it;" and he more than once tells us that the chief study of his life is to die calm and silent; and that he will plunge himself headlong and stupidly into death, as into an obscure abyss, which swallows one up in an instant; that to die was the affair of a moment's suffering, and required no precepts. He talked of reposing on the "pillow of doubt." But how did this great philosopher die? He called for the more powerful opiates of the infallible church! The mass was performed in his chamber, and, in rising to embrace it, his hands dropped and failed him; thus, as Professor Dugald Stewart observes on this philosopher—"He expired in performing what his

old preceptor, Buchanan, would not have scrupled to describe as an act of idolatry."

We must not then consider that he who paints vice with energy is therefore vicious, lest we injure an honourable man; nor must we imagine that he who celebrates virtue is therefore virtuous, for we may then repose on a heart which knowing the right pursues the wrong.

These paradoxical appearances in the history of genius present a curious moral phenomenon. Much must be attributed to the plastic nature of the versatile faculty itself. Unquestionably many men of genius have often resisted the indulgence of one talent to exercise another with equal power; and some, who have solely composed sermons, could have touched on the foibles of society with the spirit of Horace or Juvenal. Blackstone and Sir William Jones directed that genius to the austere studies of law and philology, which might have excelled in the poetical and historical character. So versatile is this faculty of genius, that its possessors are sometimes uncertain of the manner in which they shall treat their subject, whether gravely or ludicrously. When Brebœuf, the French translator of the Pharsalia of Lucan, had completed the first book as it now appears, he at the same time composed a burlesque version, and sent both to the great arbiter of taste in that day, to decide which the poet should continue. The decision proved to be difficult. Are there not writers who, with all the vehemence of genius, by adopting one principle can make all things shrink into the pigmy form of ridicule, or by adopting another principle startle us by the gigantic monsters of their own exaggerated imagination? On this principle, of the versatility of the faculty, a production of genius is a piece of art which, wrought up to its full effect with a felicity of manner acquired by taste and habit, is merely the result of certain arbitrary combinations of the mind.

Are we then to reduce the works of a man of genius to a mere sport of his talents—a game in which he is only the best player? Can he whose secret power raises so many emotions in our breasts be without any in his own? A mere actor performing a part? Is he unfeeling when he is pathetic, indifferent when he is indignant? Is he an alien to all the wisdom and virtue he inspires? No! were men of genius themselves to assert this, and it is said some incline so to do, there is a more certain conviction than their misconceptions, in our own consciousness, which for ever assures us, that deep feelings and elevated thoughts can alone spring from those who feel deeply and think nobly.

In proving that the character of the man may be very opposite to that of his writings, we must recollect that the habits of the life may be contrary to the habits of the mind.* The influence of their studies over men of genius is limited. Out of the ideal world, man is reduced to be the active creature of sensation. An author has, in truth, two distinct characters: the literary, formed by the habits of his study; the personal, by the habits of his situation. Gray, cold, effeminate, and timid in his personal, was lofty and awful in his literary character. We see men of polished manners and bland affections, who, in grasping a pen, are thrusting a poniard; while others in domestic life with the simplicity of children and the feebleness of nervous affections, can shake the senate or the bar with the vehemence of their eloquence and the intrepidity of their spirit. The writings

* Nothing is more delightful to me in my researches on the literary character than when I find in persons of unquestionable and high genius the results of my own discoveries. This circumstance has frequently happened to confirm my principles. Long after this was published, Madame de Staël made this important confession in her recent work, "Dix Années d'Exil," p. 154. "Je ne pouvais me dissimuler que je n'étais pas une personne courageuse; j'ai de la hardiesse dans *l'imagination*, mais de la timidité dans le *caractère*."

of the famous Baptista Porta are marked by the boldness of his genius, which formed a singular contrast with the pusillanimity of his conduct when menaced or attacked. The heart may be feeble, though the mind is strong. To think boldly may be the habit of the mind, to act weakly may be the habit of the constitution.

However the personal character may contrast with that of their genius, still are the works themselves genuine, and exist as realities for us—and were so, doubtless, to the composers themselves in the act of composition. In the calm of study, a beautiful imagination may convert him whose morals are corrupt into an admirable moralist, awakening feelings which yet may be cold in the business of life: as we have shown that the phlegmatic can excite himself into wit, and the cheerful man delight in "Night Thoughts." Sallust, the corrupt Sallust, might retain the most sublime conceptions of the virtues which were to save the Republic; and Sterne, whose heart was not so susceptible in ordinary occurrences, while he was gradually creating incident after incident and touching successive emotions, in the stories of Le Fevre and Maria, might have thrilled—like some of his readers. Many have mourned over the wisdom or the virtue they contemplated, mortified at their own infirmity. Thus, though there may be no identity between the book and the man, still for us an author is ever an abstract being, and, as one of the Fathers said—"A dead man may sin dead, leaving books that make others sin." An author's wisdom or his folly does not die with him. The volume, not the author, is our companion, and is for us a real personage, performing before us whatever it inspires—"He being dead, yet speaketh." Such is the vitality of a book!

CHAPTER XXI.

The man of letters.—Occupies an intermediate station between authors and readers.—His solitude described.—Often the father of genius.—Atticus, a man of letters of antiquity.—The perfect character of a modern man of letters exhibited in Peiresc.—Their utility to authors and artists.

AMONG the active members of the literary republic, there is a class whom formerly we distinguished by the title of MEN OF LETTERS—a title which, with us, has nearly gone out of currency, though I do not think that the general term of "literary men" would be sufficiently appropriate.

The man of letters, whose habits and whose whole life so closely resemble those of an author, can only be distinguished by this simple circumstance, that the man of letters is not an author.

Yet he whose sole occupation through life is literature —he who is always acquiring and never producing, appears as ridiculous as the architect who never raised an edifice, or the statuary who refrains from sculpture. His pursuits are reproached with terminating in an epicurean selfishness, and amidst his incessant avocations he himself is considered as a particular sort of idler.

This race of literary characters, as we now find them, could not have appeared till the press had poured forth its affluence. In the degree that the nations of Europe became literary, was that philosophical curiosity kindled which induced some to devote their fortunes and their days, and to experience some of the purest of human enjoyments in preserving and familiarising themselves with "the monuments of vanished minds," as books are called by D'Avenant with so much sublimity. Their expansive library presents an indestructible history of

the genius of every people, through all their eras—and whatever men have thought and whatever men have done, were at length discovered in books.

Men of letters occupy an intermediate station between authors and readers. They are gifted with more curiosity of knowledge, and more multiplied tastes, and by those precious collections which they are forming during their lives, are more completely furnished with the means than are possessed by the multitude who read, and the few who write.

The studies of an author are usually restricted to particular subjects. His tastes are tinctured by their colouring, his mind is always shaping itself by their form. An author's works form his solitary pride, and his secret power; while half his life wears away in the slow maturity of composition, and still the ambition of authorship torments its victim alike in disappointment or in possession.

But soothing is the solitude of the MAN OF LETTERS! View the busied inhabitant of the library surrounded by the objects of his love! He possesses them—and they possess him! These volumes—images of our mind and passions!—as he traces them from Herodotus to Gibbon, from Homer to Shakspeare—those portfolios which gather up the inventions of genius, and that selected cabinet of medals which holds so many unwritten histories;—some favourite sculptures and pictures, and some antiquities of all nations, here and there about his house—these are his furniture!

In his unceasing occupations the only repose he requires, consists not in quitting, but in changing them. Every day produces its discovery; every day in the life of a man of letters may furnish a multitude of emotions and of ideas. For him there is a silence amidst the world; and in the scene ever opening before him, all that has passed is acted over again, and all that is to come

seems revealed as in a vision. Often his library is contiguous to his chamber,* and this domain "*parva sed apta*," this contracted space, has often marked the boundary of the existence of the opulent owner, who lives where he will die, contracting his days into hours; and a whole life thus passed is found too short to close its designs. Such are the men who have not been unhappily described by the Hollanders as *lief-hebbers*, lovers or fanciers, and their collection as *lief-hebbery*, things of their love. The Dutch call everything for which they are impassioned *lief-hebbery;* but their feeling being much stronger than their delicacy, they apply the term to every thing, from poesy and picture to tulips and tobacco. The term wants the melody of the languages of genius; but something parallel is required to correct that indiscriminate notion which most persons associate with that of *collectors*.

It was fancifully said of one of these lovers, in the style of the age, that, "His book was his bride, and his study his bride-chamber." Many have voluntarily relinquished a public station and their rank in society, neglecting even their fortune and their health, for the life of self-oblivion

* The contiguity of the CHAMBER to the LIBRARY is not the solitary fancy of an individual, but marks the class. Early in life, when in France and Holland, I met with several of these *amateurs*, who had bounded their lives by the circle of their collections, and were rarely seen out of them. The late Duke of Roxburgh once expressed his delight to a literary friend of mine, that he had only to step from his sleeping apartment into his fine library; so that he could command, at all moments, the gratification of pursuing his researches while he indulged his reveries. The Chevalier Verhulst, of Bruxelles, of whom we have a curious portrait prefixed to the catalogue of his pictures and curiosities, was one of those men of letters who experienced this strong affection for his collections, and to such a degree, that he never went out of his house for twenty years; where, however, he kept up a courteous intercourse with the lovers of art and literature. He was an enthusiastic votary of Rubens, of whom he has written a copious life in Dutch, the only work he appears to have composed.

of the man of letters. Count De Caylus expended a princely income in the study and the encouragement of Art. He passed his mornings among the studios of artists, watching their progress, increasing his collections, and closing his day in the retirement of his own cabinet. His rank and his opulence were no obstructions to his settled habits. Cicero himself, in his happier moments, addressing Atticus, exclaimed—"I had much rather be sitting on your little bench under Aristotle's picture, than in the curule chairs of our great ones." This wish was probably sincere, and reminds us of another great politician who in his secession from public affairs retreated to a literary life, where he appears suddenly to have discovered a new-found world. Fox's favourite line, which he often repeated, was—

> How various his employments whom the world
> Calls idle!

De Sacy, one of the Port-Royalists, was fond of repeating this lively remark of a man of wit—"That all the mischief in the world comes from not being able to keep ourselves quiet in our room."

But tranquillity is essential to the existence of the man of letters—an unbroken and devotional tranquillity. For though, unlike the author, his occupations are interrupted without inconvenience, and resumed without effort; yet if the painful realities of life break into this visionary world of literature and art, there is an atmosphere of taste about him which will be dissolved, and harmonious ideas which will be chased away, as it happens when something is violently flung among the trees where the birds are singing—all instantly disperse!

Even to quit their collections for a short time is a real suffering to these lovers; everything which surrounds them becomes endeared by habit, and by some higher associations. Men of letters have died with grief from hav-

ing been forcibly deprived of the use of their libraries. De Thou, with all a brother's sympathy, in his great history, has recorded the sad fates of several who had witnessed their collections dispersed in the civil wars of France, or had otherwise been deprived of their precious volumes. Sir Robert Cotton fell ill, and betrayed, in the ashy paleness of his countenance, the misery which killed him on the sequestration of his collections. "They have broken my heart who have locked up my library from me," was his lament.

If this passion for acquisition and enjoyment be so strong and exquisite, what wonder that these "lovers" should regard all things as valueless in comparison with the objects of their love? There seem to be spells in their collections, and in their fascination they have often submitted to the ruin of their personal, but not of their internal enjoyments. They have scorned to balance in the scales the treasures of literature and art, though imperial magnificence once was ambitious to outweigh them.

Van Praun, a friend of Albert Durer's, of whom we possess a catalogue of pictures and prints, was one of these enthusiasts of taste. The Emperor of Germany, probably desirous of finding a royal road to a rare collection, sent an agent to procure the present one entire; and that some delicacy might be observed with such a man, the purchase was to be proposed in the form of a mutual exchange; the emperor had gold, pearls, and diamonds. Our *lief-hebber* having silently listened to the imperial agent, seemed astonished that such things should be considered as equivalents for a collection of works of art, which had required a long life of experience and many previous studies and practised tastes to have formed, and compared with which gold, pearls, and diamonds, afforded but a mean, an unequal, and a barbarous barter.

If the man of letters be less dependent on others for

the very perception of his own existence than men of the world are, his solitude, however, is not that of a desert: for all there tends to keep alive those concentrated feelings which cannot be indulged with security, or even without ridicule in general society. Like the Lucullus of Plutarch, he would not only live among the votaries of literature, but would live for them; he throws open his library, his gallery, and his cabinet, to all the Grecians. Such men are the fathers of genius; they seem to possess an aptitude in discovering those minds which are clouded over by the obscurity of their situations; and it is they who so frequently project those benevolent institutions, where they have poured out the philanthropy of their hearts in that world which they appear to have forsaken. If Europe be literary, to whom does she owe this more than to these men of letters? Is it not to their noble passion of amassing through life those magnificent collections, which often bear the names of their founders from the gratitude of a following age? Venice, Florence, and Copenhagen, Oxford, and London, attest the existence of their labours. Our Bodleys and our Harleys, our Cottons and our Sloanes, our Cracherodes, our Townleys, and our Banks, were of this race!* In the perpetuity of their own studies they felt as if they were extending human longevity, by throwing an unbroken light of knowledge into the next age. The private

* Sir Thomas Bodley, in 1602, first brought the old libraries at Oxford into order for the benefit of students, and added thereto his own noble collection. That of Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford (died 1724), was purchased by the country, and is now in the British Museum; and also are the other collections named above. Sir Robert Cotton died 1631; his collection is remarkable for its historic documents and state-papers. Sir Hans Sloane's collections may be said to be the foundation, of the British Museum, and were purchased by Government for 20,000*l.* after his death, in 1749. Of Cracherode and Townley some notice will be found on p. 2 of the present volume. Sir Joseph Banks and his sister made large bequests to the same national establishment.—Ed.

acquisitions of a solitary man of letters during half a century have become public endowments. A generous enthusiasm inspired these intrepid labours, and their voltary privations of what the world calls its pleasures and its honours, would form an interesting history not yet written; their due, yet undischarged.

But "men of the world," as they are emphatically distinguished, imagine that a man so lifeless in "the world" must be one of the dead in it, and, with mistaken wit, would inscribe over the sepulchre of his library, "Here lies the body of our friend." If the man of letters have voluntarily quitted their "world," at least he has passed into another, where he enjoys a sense of existence through a long succession of ages, and where Time, who destroys all things for others, for him only preserves and discovers. This world is best described by one who has lingered among its inspirations. "We are wafted into other times and strange lands, connecting us by a sad but exalting relationship with the great events and great minds which have passed away. Our studies at once cherish and control the imagination, by leading it over an unbounded range of the noblest scenes in the overawing company of departed wisdom and genius."*

Living more with books than with men, which is often becoming better acquainted with man himself, though not always with men, the man of letters is more tolerant of opinions than opinionists are among themselves. Nor are his views of human affairs contracted to the day, like those who, in the heat and hurry of a too active life, prefer expedients to principles; men who deem themselves politicians because they are not moralists; to whom the centuries behind have conveyed no results, and who cannot see how the present time is always full of the

* "Quarterly Review," No. xxxiii., p. 145.

future. "Everything," says the lively Burnet, "must be brought to the nature of tinder or gunpowder, ready for a spark to set it on fire," before they discover it. The man of letters indeed is accused of a cold indifference to the interests which divide society; he is rarely observed as the head or the "rump of a party;" he views at a distance their temporary passions—those mighty beginnings, of which he knows the miserable terminations.

Antiquity presents the character of a perfect man of letters in Atticus, who retreated from a political to a literary life. Had his letters accompanied those of Cicero, they would have illustrated the ideal character of his class. But the sage Atticus rejected a popular celebrity for a passion not less powerful, yielding up his whole soul to study. Cicero, with all his devotion to literature, was at the same time agitated by another kind of glory, and the most perfect author in Rome imagined that he was enlarging his honours by the intrigues of the consulship. He has distinctly marked the character of the man of letters in the person of his friend Atticus, for which he has expressed his respect, although he could not content himself with its imitation. "I know," says this man of genius and ambition, "I know the greatness and ingenuousness of your soul, nor have I found any difference between us, but in a different choice of life; a certain sort of ambition has led me earnestly to seek after honours, while other motives, by no means blameable induced you to adopt an honourable leisure; *honestum otium.*"* These motives appear in the interesting memoirs of this man of letters; a contempt of political intrigues combined with a desire to escape from the splendid bustle of Rome to the learned leisure of Athens. He wished to dismiss a pompous train of slaves

* "Ad Atticum," Lib. i., Ep. 17

for the delight of assembling under his roof a literary society of readers and transcribers. And having collected under that roof the portraits or busts of the illustrious men of his country, inspired by their spirit and influenced by their virtues or their genius, he inscribed under them, in concise verses, the characters of their mind. Valuing wealth only for its use, a dignified economy enabled him to be profuse, and a moderate expenditure allowed him to be generous.

The result of this literary life was the strong affections of the Athenians. At the first opportunity the absence of the man of letters offered, they raised a statue to him, conferring on our Pomponius the fond surname of Atticus. To have received a name from the voice of the city they inhabited has happened to more than one man of letters. Pinelli, born a Neapolitan, but residing at Venice, among other peculiar honours received from the senate, was there distinguished by the affectionate title of "the Venetian."

Yet such a character as Atticus could not escape censure from "men of the world." They want the heart and the imagination to conceive something better than themselves. The happy indifference, perhaps the contempt of our Atticus for rival factions, they have stigmatised as a cold neutrality, a timid pusillanimous hypocrisy. Yet Atticus could not have been a mutual friend, had not both parties alike held the man of letters as a sacred being amidst their disguised ambition; and the urbanity of Atticus, while it balanced the fierceness of two heroes, Pompey and Cæsar, could even temper the rivalry of genius in the orators Hortensius and Cicero. A great man of our own country widely differed from the accusers of Atticus. Sir Matthew Hale lived in distracted times, and took the character of our man of letters for his model, adopting two principles in the conduct of the Roman. He engaged himself with no party busi-

ness, and afforded a constant relief to the unfortunate, of whatever party. He was thus preserved amidst the contests of the times.

If the personal interest of the man of letters be not deeply involved in society, his individual prosperity, however, is never contrary to public happiness. Other professions necessarily exist by the conflict and the calamities of the community: the politician becomes great by hatching an intrigue; the lawyer, in counting his briefs; the physician, his sick-list. The soldier is clamorous for war; the merchant riots on high prices. But the man of letters only calls for peace and books, to unite himself with his brothers scattered over Europe; and his usefulness can only be felt at those intervals, when, after a long interchange of destruction, men, recovering their senses, discover that "knowledge is power." Burke, whose ample mind took in every conception of the literary character, has finely touched on the distinction between this order of contemplative men, and the other active classes of society. In addressing Mr. Malone, whose real character was that of a man of letters who first showed us the neglected state of our literary history, Burke observed—for I shall give his own words, always too beautiful to alter—"If you are not called to exert your great talents, and employ your great acquisitions in the transitory service of your country, which is done in active life, you will continue to do it that permanent service which it receives from the labours of those who know how to make the silence of closets more beneficial to the world than all the noise and bustle of courts, senates, and camps."

A moving picture of the literary life of a man of letters who was no author, would have been lost to us, had not Peiresc found in Gassendi a twin spirit. So intimate was the biographer with the very thoughts, so closely united in the same pursuits, and so perpetual an observer

of the remarkable man whom he has immortalised, that when employed on this elaborate resemblance of his friend, he was only painting himself with all the identifying strokes of self-love.*

It was in the vast library of Pinelli, the founder of the most magnificent one in Europe, that Peiresc, then a youth, felt the remote hope of emulating the man of letters before his eyes. His life was not without preparation, nor without fortunate coincidences; but there was a grandeur of design in the execution which originated in the genius of the man himself.

The curious genius of Peiresc was marked by its precocity, as usually are strong passions in strong minds; this intense curiosity was the germ of all those studies which seemed mature in his youth. He early resolved on a personal intercourse with the great literary characters of Europe; and his friend has thrown over these literary travels that charm of detail by which we accompany Peiresc into the libraries of the learned; there with the historian opening new sources of history, or with the critic correcting manuscripts, and settling points of erudition; or by the opened cabinet of the antiquary, deciphering obscure inscriptions, and explaining medals. In the galleries of the curious in art, among their marbles, their pictures, and their prints, Peiresc has often revealed to the artist some secret in his own art. In the museum of the naturalist, or the garden of the botanist, there was no rarity of nature on which he had not something to communicate. His mind toiled with that impatience of knowledge, that becomes a pain only when the mind is not on the advance. In England Peiresc was the associate

* "I suppose," writes Evelyn, that most agreeable enthusiast of literature, to a travelling friend, "that you carry the life of that incomparable virtuoso always about you in your motions, not only because it is portable, but for that it is written by the pen of the great Gassendus."

of Camden and Selden, and had more than one interview with that friend to literary men, our calumniated James the First. One may judge by these who were the men whom Peiresc sought, and by whom he himself was ever after sought. Such, indeed, were immortal friendships! Immortal they may be justly called, from the objects in which they concerned themselves, and from the permanent results of the combined studies of such friends.

Another peculiar greatness in this literary character was Peiresc's enlarged devotion to literature out of its purest love for itself alone. He made his own universal curiosity the source of knowledge to other men. Considering the studious as forming but one great family wherever they were, for Peiresc the national repositories of knowledge in Europe formed but one collection for the world. This man of letters had possessed himself of their contents, that he might have manuscripts collated, unedited pieces explored, extracts supplied, and even draughtsmen employed in remote parts of the world, to furnish views and plans, and to copy antiquities for the student, who in some distant retirement often discovered that the literary treasures of the world were unfailingly opened to him by the secret devotion of this man of letters.

Carrying on the same grandeur in his views, his universal mind busied itself in every part of the habitable globe. He kept up a noble traffic with all travellers, supplying them with philosophical instruments and recent inventions, by which he facilitated their discoveries, and secured their reception even in barbarous realms. In return he claimed, at his own cost, for he was "born rather to give than to receive," says Gassendi, fresh importations of Oriental literature, curious antiquities, or botanic rarities; and it was the curiosity of Peiresc which first embellished his own garden, and thence the gardens of Europe, with a rich variety of exotic flowers

and fruits.* Whenever presented with a medal, a vase, or a manuscript, he never slept over the gift till he had discovered what the donor delighted in; and a book, a picture, a plant, when money could not be offered, fed their mutual passion, and sustained the general cause of science. The correspondence of Peiresc branched out to the farthest bounds of Ethiopia, connected both Americas, and had touched the newly-discovered extremities of the universe, when this intrepid mind closed in a premature death.

I have drawn this imperfect view of Peiresc's character, that men of letters may be reminded of the capacity they possess. In the character of Peiresc, however, there still remains another peculiar feature. His fortune was not great; and when he sometimes endured the reproach of those whose sordidness was startled at his prodigality of mind, and the great objects which were the result, Peiresc replied, that "a small matter suffices for the natural wants of a literary man, whose true wealth consists in the monuments of arts, the treasures of his library, and the brotherly affections of the ingenious." Peiresc was a French judge, but he supported his rank more by his own character than by luxury or parade. He would not wear silk, and no tapestry hangings ornamented his apartments; but the walls were covered with the portraits of his literary friends; and in the unadorned simplicity of his study, his books, his papers, and his letters were scattered about him on the tables, the seats, and the floor. There, stealing from the world, he would sometimes admit to his spare supper his friend Gassendi, "content," says that amiable philosopher, "to have me for his guest."

Peiresc, like Pinelli, never published any work. These

* On this subject see "Curiosities of Literature," vol. ii., p. 151; and for some further account of Peiresc and his labours, vol. iii., p. 409, of the same work.—Ed.

men of letters derived their pleasure, and perhaps their pride, from those vast strata of knowledge which their curiosity had heaped together in their mighty collections. They either were not endowed with that faculty of genius which strikes out aggregate views, or were destitute of the talent of composition which embellishes minute ones. This deficiency in the minds of such men may be attributed to a thirst of learning, which the very means to allay can only inflame. From all sides they are gathering information; and that knowledge seems never perfect to which every day brings new acquisitions. With these men, to compose is to hesitate; and to revise is to be mortified by fresh doubts and unsupplied omissions. Peiresc was employed all his life on a history of Provence; but, observes Gassendi, "He could not mature the birth of his literary offspring, or lick it into any shape of elegant form; he was therefore content to take the midwife's part, by helping the happier labours of others."

Such are the cultivators of knowledge, who are rarely authors, but who are often, however, contributing to the works of others; and without whose secret labours the public would not have possessed many valued ones. The delightful instruction which these men are constantly offering to authors and to artists, flows from their silent but uninterrupted cultivation of literature and the arts.

When Robertson, after his successful "History of Scotland," was long irresolute in his designs, and still unpractised in that curious research which habitually occupies these men of letters, his admirers had nearly lost his popular productions, had not a fortunate introduction to Dr. Birch enabled him to open the clasped books, and to drink of the sealed fountains. Robertson has confessed his inadequate knowledge, and his overflowing gratitude, in letters which I have elsewhere printed. A suggestion by a man of letters has opened

the career of many an aspirant. A hint from Walsh conveyed a new conception of English poetry to one of its masters. The celebrated treatise of Grotius on "Peace and War" was projected by Peiresc. It was said of Magliabechi, who knew all books, and never wrote one, that by his diffusive communications he was in some respect concerned in all the great works of his times. Sir Robert Cotton greatly assisted Camden and Speed; and that hermit of literature, Baker of Cambridge, was ever supplying with his invaluable researches Burnet, Kennet, Hearne, and Middleton. The concealed aid which men of letters afford authors, may be compared to those subterraneous streams, which, flowing into spacious lakes, are, though unobserved, enlarging the waters which attract the public eye.

Count De Caylus, celebrated for his collection, and for his generous patronage of artists, has given the last touches to this picture of the man of letters, with all the delicacy and warmth of a self-painter.

"His glory is confined to the mere power which he has of being one day useful to letters and to the arts; for his whole life is employed in collecting materials of which learned men and artists make no use till after the death of him who amassed them. It affords him a very sensible pleasure to labour in hopes of being useful to those who pursue the same course of studies, while there are so great a number who die without discharging the debt which they incur to society."

Such a man of letters appears to have been the late Lord Woodhouselee. Mr. Mackenzie, returning from his lordship's literary retirement, meeting Mr. Alison, finely said, that "he hoped he was going to Woodhouselee; for no man could go there without being happier, or return from it without being better."

Shall we then hesitate to assert, that this class of literary men forms a useful, as well as a select order in

society? We see that their leisure is not idleness, that their studies are not unfruitful for the public, and that their opinions, purified from passions and prejudices, are always the soundest in the nation. They are counsellors whom statesmen may consult; fathers of genius to whom authors and artists may look for aid, and friends of all nations; for we ourselves have witnessed, during a war of thirty years, that the MEN OF LETTERS in England were still united with their brothers in France. The abode of Sir Joseph Banks was ever open to every literary and scientific foreigner; while a wish expressed or a communication written by this MAN OF LETTERS, was even respected by a political power which, acknowledging no other rights, paid a voluntary tribute to the claims of science and the privileges of literature.

CHAPTER XXII.

Literary old age still learning.—Influence of late studies in life.—Occupations in advanced age of the literary character.—Of literary men who have died at their studies.

THE old age of the literary character retains its enjoyments, and usually its powers—a happiness which accompanies no other. The old age of coquetry witnesses its own extinct beauty; that of the "used" idler is left without a sensation; that of the grasping Crœsus exists only to envy his heir; and that of the Machiavel who has no longer a voice in the cabinet, is but an unhappy spirit lingering to find its grave: but for the aged man of letters memory returns to her stores, and imagination is still on the wing amidst fresh discoveries and new designs. The others fall like dry leaves, but he drops like ripe fruit, and is valued when no longer on the tree.

The constitutional melancholy of Johnson often tinged his views of human life. When he asserted that "no man adds much to his stock of knowledge, or improves much after forty," his theory was overturned by his own experience; for his most interesting works were the productions of a very late period of life, formed out of the fresh knowledge with which he had then furnished himself.

The intellectual faculties, the latest to decline, are often vigorous in the decrepitude of age. The curious mind is still striking out into new pursuits, and the mind of genius is still creating. ANCORA IMPARO!—"Even yet I am learning!" was the concise inscription on an ingenious device of an old man placed in a child's go-cart, with an hour-glass upon it, which, it is said, Michael Angelo applied to his own vast genius in his ninetieth year. Painters have improved even to extreme old age: West's last works were his best, and Titian was greatest on the verge of his century. Poussin was delighted with the discovery of this circumstance in the lives of painters. "As I grow older, I feel the desire of surpassing myself." And it was in the last year of his life, that with the finest poetical invention, he painted the allegorical pictures of the Seasons. A man of letters in his sixtieth year once told me, "It is but of late years that I have learnt the right use of books and the art of reading."

Time, the great destroyêr of other men's happiness, only enlarges the patrimony of literature to its possessor. A learned and highly intellectual friend once said to me, "If I have acquired more knowledge these last four years than I had hitherto, I shall add materially to my stores in the next four years; and so at every subsequent period of my life, should I acquire only in the same proportion, the general mass of my knowledge will greatly accumulate. If we are not deprived by nature or misfortune of the means to pursue this perpetual augmentation of

knowledge, I do not see but we may be still fully occupied and deeply interested even to the last day of our earthly term." Such is the delightful thought of Owen Feltham: "If I die to-morrow, my life will be somewhat the sweeter to-day for knowledge." The perfectibility of the human mind, the animating theory of the eloquent De Staël, consists in the mass of our ideas, to which every age will now add, by means unknown to preceding generations. Imagination was born at once perfect, and her arts find a term to their progress; but there is no boundary to knowledge nor the discovery of thought.

How beautiful in the old age of the literary character was the plan which a friend of mine pursued! His mind, like a mirror whose quicksilver had not decayed, reflected all objects to the last. Full of learned studies and versatile curiosity, he annually projected a summer-tour on the Continent to some remarkable spot. The local associations were an unfailing source of agreeable impressions to a mind so well prepared, and he presented his friends with a "Voyage Littéraire," as a new-year's gift. In such pursuits, where life is "rather wearing out than rusting out," as Bishop Cumberland expressed it, scarcely shall we feel those continued menaces of death which shake the old age of men of no intellectual pursuits, who are dying so many years.

Active enjoyments in the decline of life, then, constitute the happiness of literary men. The study of the arts and literature spreads a sunshine over the winter of their days. In the solitude and the night of human life, they discover that unregarded kindness of nature, which has given flowers that only open in the evening, and only bloom through the night-season. Necker perceived the influence of late studies in life; for he tells us, that "the era of threescore and ten is an agreeable age for writing; your mind has not lost its vigour, and envy leaves you in peace."

The opening of one of La Mothe le Vayer's Treatises is striking: "I should but ill return the favours God has granted me in the eightieth year of my age, should I allow myself to give way to that shameless want of occupation which all my life I have condemned;" and the old man proceeds with his "Observations on the Composition and Reading of Books." "If man be a bubble of air, it is then time that I should hasten my task; for my eightieth year admonishes me to get my baggage together ere I leave the world," wrote Varro, in opening his curious treatise *de Re Rustica*, which the sage lived to finish, and which, after nearly two thousand years, the world possesses. "My works are many, and I am old; yet I still can fatigue and tire myself with writing more," says Petrarch in his "Epistle to Posterity." The literary character has been fully occupied in the eightieth and the ninetieth year of life. Isaac Walton still glowed while writing some of the most interesting biographies in his eighty-fifth year, and in the ninetieth enriched the poetical world with the first publication of a romantic tale by Chalkhill, "the friend of Spenser." Bodmer, beyond eighty, was occupied on Homer, and Wieland on Cicero's Letters.*

But the delight of opening a new pursuit, or a new course of reading, imparts the vivacity and novelty of youth even to old age. The revolutions of modern chemistry kindled the curiosity of Dr. Reid to his latest days, and he studied by various means to prevent the decay of his faculties, and to remedy the deficiencies of one failing sense by the increased activity of another. A late popular author, when advanced in life, discovered, in a class of reading to which he had never been accustomed, a profuse supply of fresh furniture for his mind. This felicity was the delightfulness of the old age of Goethe—

* See "Curiosities of Literature," on "The progress of old age in new studies."

literature, art, and science, formed his daily inquiries; and this venerable genius, prompt to receive each novel impression, was a companion for the youthful, and a communicator of knowledge even for the most curious.

Even the steps of time are retraced, and we resume the possessions we seemed to have lost; for in advanced life a return to our early studies refreshes and renovates the spirits: we open the poets who made us enthusiasts, and the philosophers who taught us to think, with a new source of feeling acquired by our own experience. Adam Smith confessed his satisfaction at this pleasure to Professor Dugald Stewart, while "he was reperusing, with the enthusiasm of a student, the tragic poets of ancient Greece, and Sophocles and Euripides lay open on his table."

> Dans ses veines toujours un jeune sang bouillone,
> Et Sophocle à cent ans peint encore Antigone.

The calm philosophic Hume found that death could only interrupt the keen pleasure he was again receiving from Lucian, inspiring at the moment a humorous self-dialogue with Charon. "Happily," said this philosopher, "on retiring from the world I found my taste for reading return, even with greater avidity." We find Gibbon, after the close of his History, returning with an appetite as keen to "a full repast on Homer and Aristophanes, and involving himself in the philosophic maze of the writings of Plato." Lord Woodhouselee found the recomposition of his "Lectures on History" so fascinating in the last period of his life, that Mr. Alison informs us, "it rewarded him with that *peculiar delight*, which has been often observed in the later years of literary men; the delight of returning again to the studies of their youth, and of feeling under the snows of age the cheerful memories of their spring."*

* There is an interesting chapter on Favourite Authors in "Curiosities of Literature," vol. ii., to which the reader may be referred for other examples.—Ed

Not without a sense of exultation has the literary character felt this peculiar happiness, in the unbroken chain of his habits, and his feelings. Hobbes exulted that he had outlived his enemies, and was still the same Hobbes; and to demonstrate the reality of this existence, published, in the eighty-seventh year of his age, his version of the *Odyssey*, and the following year his *Iliad*. Of the happy results of literary habits in advanced life, the Count De Tressan, the elegant abridger of the old French romances, in his "Literary Advice to his Children" has drawn a most pleasing picture. With a taste for study, which he found rather inconvenient in the moveable existence of a man of the world, and a military wanderer, he had, however, contrived to reserve an hour or two every day for literary pursuits. The men of science, with whom he had chiefly associated, appear to have turned his passion to observation and knowledge rather than towards imagination and feeling; the combination formed a wreath for his grey hairs. When Count De Tressan retired from a brilliant to an affectionate circle, amidst his family, he pursued his literary tastes with the vivacity of a young author inspired by the illusion of fame. At the age of seventy-five, with the imagination of a poet, he abridged, he translated, he recomposed his old Chivalric Romances, and his reanimated fancy struck fire in the veins of the old man. Among the first designs of his retirement was a singular philosophical legacy for his children. It was a view of the history and progress of the human mind—of its principles, its errors, and its advantages, as these were reflected in himself; in the dawnings of his taste, and the secret inclinations of his mind, which the men of genius of the age with whom he associated had developed. Expatiating on their memory, he calls on his children to witness the happiness of study, so evident in those pleasures which were soothing and adorning his old age. "Without knowledge, without litera-

ture," exclaims the venerable enthusiast, "in whatever rank we are born, we can only resemble the vulgar." To the centenary Fontenelle the Count De Tressan was chiefly indebted for the happy life he derived from the cultivation of literature; and when this man of a hundred years died, Tressan, himself on the borders of the grave, would offer the last fruits of his mind in an *éloge* to his ancient master. It was the voice of the dying to the dead, a last moment of the love and sensibility of genius, which feeble life could not extinguish.

The genius of Cicero, inspired by the love of literature, has thrown something delightful over this latest season of life, in his *de Senectute*. To have written on old age, in old age, is to have obtained a triumph over Time.*

When the literary character shall discover himself to be like a stranger in a new world, when all that he loved has not life, and all that lives has no love for old age: when his ear has ceased to listen, and nature has locked up the man within himself, he may still expire amidst his busied thoughts. Such aged votaries, like the old bees, have been found dying in their honeycombs. Let them preserve but the flame alive on the altar, and at the last moments they may be found in the act of sacrifice! The venerable Bede, the instructor of his generation, and the historian for so many successive ones, expired in the act of dictating. Such was the fate of Petrarch, who, not long before his death, had written to a friend, "I read, I write, I think; such is my life, and my pleasures as they were in my youth." Petrarch was found lying on a folio in his library, from which volume he had been busied making extracts for the biography of his country men. His domestics having often observed him studying in that reclining posture for days together, it was long

* "Spurinna, or the Comforts of Old Age," by the late Sir Thomas Bernard, was written a year or two before he died.

before they discovered that the poet was no more. The fate of Leibnitz was similar: he was found dead with the "Argenis" of Barclay in his hand; he had been studying the style of that political romance as a model for his intended history of the House of Brunswick. The literary death of Barthelemy affords a remarkable proof of the force of uninterrupted habits of study. He had been slightly looking over the newspaper, when suddenly he called for a Horace, opened the volume, and found the passage, on which he paused for a moment; and then, too feeble to speak, made a sign to bring him Dacier's; but his hands were already cold, the Horace fell—and the classical and dying man of letters sunk into a fainting fit, from which he never recovered. Such, too, was the fate—perhaps now told for the first time—of the great Lord Clarendon. It was in the midst of composition that his pen suddenly dropped from his hand on the paper, he took it up again, and again it dropped: deprived of the sense of touch—his hand without motion—the earl perceived himself struck by palsy—and the life of the noble exile closed amidst the warmth of a literary work unfinished!

CHAPTER XXIII.

Universality of genius.—Limited notion of genius entertained by the ancients.—Opposite faculties act with diminished force.—Men of genius excel only in a single art.

THE ancients addicted themselves to one species of composition; the tragic poet appears not to have entered into the province of comedy, nor, as far as we know, were their historians writers of verse. Their artists worked on the same principle; and from Pliny's

account of the ancient sculptors, we may infer that with them the true glory of genius consisted in carrying to perfection a single species of their art. They did not exercise themselves indifferently on all subjects, but cultivated the favourite ones which they had chosen from the impulse of their own imagination. The hand which could copy nature in a human form, with the characteristics of the age and the sex, and the occupations of life, refrained from attempting the colossal and ideal majesty of a divinity; and when one of these sculptors, whose skill was pre-eminent in casting animals, had exquisitely wrought the glowing coursers for a triumphal car, he requested the aid of Praxiteles to place the driver in the chariot, that his work might not be disgraced by a human form of inferior beauty to his animals. Alluding to the devotion of an ancient sculptor to his labours, Madame de Staël has finely said, "The history of his life was the history of his statue."

Such was the limited conception which the ancients formed of genius. They confined it to particular objects or departments in art. But there is a tendency among men of genius to ascribe a universality of power to a master-intellect. Dryden imagined that Virgil could have written satire equally with Juvenal, and some have hardily defined genius as "a power to accomplish all that we undertake." But literary history will detect this fallacy, and the failures of so many eminent men are instructions from Nature which must not be lost on us.

No man of genius put forth more expansive promises of universal power than Leibnitz. Science, imagination, history, criticism, fertilized the richest of human soils; yet Leibnitz, with immense powers and perpetual knowledge, dissipated them in the multiplicity of his pursuits. "The first of philosophers," the late Professor Playfair observed, "has left nothing in the immense tract of his [illegible]t which can be distinguished as a monument of

his genius." As a universalist, Voltaire remains unparalleled in ancient or in modern times. This voluminous idol of our neighbours stands without a rival in literature; but an exception, even if this were one, cannot overturn a fundamental principle, for we draw our conclusions not from the fortune of one man of genius, but from the fate of many. The real claims of this great writer to invention and originality are as moderate as his size and his variety are astonishing. The wonder of his ninety volumes is, that he singly consists of a number of men of the second order, making up one great man; for unquestionably some could rival Voltaire in any single province, but no one but himself has possessed them all. Voltaire discovered a new art, that of creating a supplement to the genius which had preceded him; and without Corneille, Racine, and Ariosto, it would be difficult to conjecture what sort of a poet Voltaire could have been. He was master, too, of a secret in composition, which consisted in a new style and manner. His style promotes, but never interrupts thinking, while it renders all subjects familiar to our comprehension: his manner consists in placing objects well known in new combinations; he ploughed up the fallow lands, and renovated the worn-out exhausted soils. Swift defined a good style, as "proper words in proper places." Voltaire's impulse was of a higher flight, "proper thoughts on proper subjects." Swift's idea was that of a grammarian. Voltaire's feeling was that of a philosopher. We are only considering this universal writer in his literary character, which has fewer claims to the character of an inventor than several who never attained to his celebrity.

Are the original powers of genius, then, limited to a single art, and even to departments in that art? May not men of genius plume themselves with the vainglory of universality? Let us dare to call this a vainglory; for he who stands the first in his class, does not really add

to the distinctive character of his genius, by a versatility which, however apparently successful is always subordinate to the great character on which his fame rests. It is only that character which bears the raciness of the soil; it is only that impulse whose solitary force stamps the authentic work of genius. To execute equally well on a variety of subjects may raise a suspicion of the nature of the executive power. Should it be mimetic, the ingenious writer may remain absolutely destitute of every claim to genius. Du Clos has been refused the honours of genius by the French critics, because he wrote equally well on a variety of subjects.

I know that this principle is contested by some of great name, who have themselves evinced a wonderful variety of powers. This penurious principle flatters not that egotism which great writers share in common with the heroes who have aimed at universal empire. Besides, this universality may answer many temporary purposes. These writers may, however, observe that their contemporaries are continually disputing on the merits of their versatile productions, and the most contrary opinions are even formed by their admirers; but their great individual character standing by itself, and resembling no other, is a positive excellence. It is time only, who is influenced by no name, and will never, like contemporaries, mistake the true work of genius.

And if it be true that the primary qualities of the mind are so different in men of genius as to render them more apt for one class than for another, it would seem that whenever a pre-eminent faculty had shaped the mind, a faculty of the most contrary nature must act with a diminished force, and the other often with an exclusive one. An impassioned and pathetic genius has never become equally eminent as a comic genius. Richardson and Fielding could not have written each other's works. Could Butler, who excelled in wit and satire,

like Milton have excelled in sentiment and imagination? Some eminent men have shown remarkable failures in their attempts to cultivate opposite departments in their own pursuits. The tragedies and the comedies of Dryden equally prove that he was not blest with a dramatic genius. Cibber, a spirited comic writer, was noted for the most degrading failures in tragedy; while Rowe, successful in the softer tones of the tragic muse, proved as luckless a candidate for the smiles of the comic as the pathetic Otway. La Fontaine, unrivalled humorist as a fabulist, found his opera hissed, and his romance utterly tedious. The true genius of Sterne was of a descriptive and pathetic cast, and his humour and ribaldry were a perpetual violation of his natural bent. Alfieri's great tragic powers could not strike out into comedy or wit. Scarron declared he intended to write a tragedy. The experiment was not made; but with his strong cast of mind and habitual associations, we probably have lost a new sort of "Roman comique." Cicero failed in poetry, Addison in oratory, Voltaire in comedy, and Johnson in tragedy. The Anacreontic poet remains only Anacreontic in his epic. With the fine arts the same occurrence has happened. It has been observed in painting, that the school eminent for design was deficient in colouring; while those who with Titian's warmth could make the blood circulate in the flesh, could never rival the expression and anatomy of even the middling artists of the Roman school.

Even among those rare and gifted minds which have startled us by the versatility of their powers, whence do they derive the high character of their genius? Their durable claims are substantiated by what is inherent in themselves—what is individual—and not by that flexibility which may include so much which others can equal. We rate them by their positive originality, not by their variety of powers. When we think of Young, it is only

of his "Night Thoughts," not of his tragedies, nor his poems, nor even of his satires, which others have rivalled or excelled. Of Akenside, the solitary work of genius is his great poem; his numerous odes are not of a higher order than those of other ode-writers. Had Pope only composed odes and tragedies, the great philosophical poet, master of human life and of perfect verse, had not left an undying name. Teniers, unrivalled in the walk of his genius, degraded history by the meanness of his conceptions. Such instances abound, and demonstrate an important truth in the history of genius that we cannot, however we may incline, enlarge the natural extent of our genius, any more than we can "add a cubit to our stature." We may force it into variations, but in multiplying mediocrity, or in doing what others can do, we add nothing to genius.

So true is it that men of genius appear only to excel in a single art, or even in a single department of art, that it is usual with men of taste to resort to a particular artist for a particular object. Would you ornament your house by interior decorations, to whom would you apply if you sought the perfection of art, but to *different artists*, of very distinct characters in their invention and their execution? For your arabesques you would call in the artist whose delicacy of touch and playfulness of ideas are not to be expected from the grandeur of the historical painter, or the sweetness of the *Paysagiste.* Is it not evident that men of genius *excel* only in one department of their art, and that whatever they do with the utmost original perfection, cannot be equally done by another man of genius? He whose undeviating genius guards itself in its own true sphere, has the greatest chance of encountering no rival. He is a Dante, a Milton, a Michael Angelo, a Raphael: his hand will not labour on what the Italians call *pasticcios;* and he remains not unimitated but inimitable.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Literature an avenue to glory.—An intellectual nobility not chimerical, but created by public opinion.—Literary honours of various nations.—Local associations with the memory of the man of genius.

LITERATURE is an avenue to glory, ever open for those ingenious men who are deprived of honours or of wealth. Like that illustrious Roman who owed nothing to his ancestors, *videtur ex se natus*, these seem self-born; and in the baptism of fame, they have given themselves their name. Bruyère has finely said of men of genius, "These men have neither ancestors nor posterity; they alone compose their whole race."

But Akenside, we have seen, blushed when his lameness reminded him of the fall of one of his father's cleavers; Prior, the son of a vintner, could not endure to be reminded, though by his favourite Horace, that "the cask retains its flavour;" like Voiture, another descendant of a *marchand de vin*, whose heart sickened over that which exhilarates all other hearts, whenever his opinion of its *quality*, was maliciously consulted. All these instances too evidently prove that genius is subject to the most vulgar infirmities.

But some have thought more courageously. The amiable Rollin was the son of a cutler, but the historian of nations never felt his dignity compromised by his birth. Even late in life, he ingeniously alluded to his first occupation, for we find an epigram of his in sending a knife for a new-years's gift, "informing his friend, that should this present appear to come rather from Vulcan than from Minerva, it should not surprise, for," adds the epigrammatist, "it was from the cavern of the Cyclops I began to direct my footsteps towards Parnassus." The great political negotiator, Cardinal D'Ossat, was elevated

by his genius from an orphan state of indigence, and was alike destitute of ancestry, of titles, even of parents. On the day of his creation, when others of noble extraction assumed new titles from the seignorial names of their ancient houses, he was at a loss to fix on one. Having asked the Pope whether he should choose that of his bishopric, his holiness requested him to preserve his plain family name, which he had rendered famous by his own genius. The sons of a sword-maker, a potter, and a tax-gatherer, were the greatest of the orators, the most majestic of the poets, and the most graceful of the satirists of antiquity; Demosthenes, Virgil, and Horace. The eloquent Massillon, the brilliant Fléchier, Rousseau, and Diderot; Johnson, Goldsmith, and Franklin, arose amidst the most humble avocations.

Vespasian raised a statue to the historian Josephus, though a Jew; and the Athenians one to Æsop, though a slave. Even among great military republics the road to public honour was open, not alone to heroes and patricians, but to that solitary genius which derives from itself all which it gives to the public, and nothing from its birth or the public situation it occupies.

It is the prerogative of genius to elevate obscure men to the higher class of society. If the affluence of wealth in the present day has created a new aristocracy of its own, where they already begin to be jealous of their ranks, we may assert that genius creates a sort of intellectual nobility, which is now conferred by public feeling; as heretofore the surnames of "the African," and of "Coriolanus," won by valour, associated with the names of the conqueror of Africa and the vanquisher of Corioli. Were men of genius, as such, to have armorial bearings, they might consist, not of imaginary things, of griffins and chimeras, but of deeds performed and of public works in existence. When Dondi raised the great astronomical clock at the University of Padua, which was

long the admiration of Europe, it gave a name and nobility to its maker and all his descendants. There still lives a Marquis Dondi dal' Horologio. Sir Hugh Middleton, in memory of his vast enterprise, changed his former arms to bear three piles, to perpetuate the interesting circumstance, that by these instruments he had strengthened the works he had invented, when his genius poured forth the waters through our metropolis, thereby distinguishing it from all others in the world. Should not Evelyn have inserted an oak-tree in his bearings? for his "Sylva" occasioned the plantation of "many millions of timber-trees," and the present navy of Great Britain has been constructed with the oaks which the genius of Evelyn planted. There was an eminent Italian musician, who had a piece of music inscribed on his tomb; and I have heard of a Dutch mathematician, who had a calculation for his epitaph.

We who were reproached for a coldness in our national character, have caught the inspiration and enthusiasm for the works and the celebrity of genius; the symptoms indeed were long dubious. Reynolds wished to have one of his own pictures, "Contemplation in the figure of an Angel," carried at his funeral; a custom not unusual with foreign painters; but it was not deemed prudent to comply with this last wish of the great artist, from the fears entertained as to the manner in which a London populace might have received such a novelty. This shows that the profound feeling of art is still confined within a circle among us, of which hereafter the circumference perpetually enlarging, may embrace even the whole people. If the public have borrowed the names of some lords to dignify a "Sandwich" and a "Spencer," we may be allowed to raise into titles of literary nobility those distinctions which the public voice has attached to some authors; *Æschylus* Potter, *Athenian* Stuart, and *Anacreon* Moore. Butler, in his own day,

was more generally known by the single and singular name of *Hudibras*, than by his own.

This intellectual nobility is not chimerical. Such titles must be found indeed, in the years which are to come; yet the prelude of their fame distinguishes these men from the crowd. Whenever the rightful possessor appears, will not the eyes of all spectators be fixed on him? I allude to scenes which I have witnessed. Will not even literary honours superadd a nobility to nobility; and make a name instantly recognised which might otherwise be hidden under its rank, and remain unknown by its title? Our illustrious list of literary noblemen is far more glorious than the satirical "Catalogue of Noble Authors," drawn up by a polished and heartless cynic, who has pointed his brilliant shafts at all who were chivalrous in spirit, or related to the family of genius. One may presume on the existence of this intellectual nobility, from the extraordinary circumstance that the great have actually felt a jealousy of the literary rank. But no rivalry can exist in the solitary honour conferred on an author. It is not an honour derived from birth nor creation, but from PUBLIC OPINION, and inseparable from his name, as an essential quality; for the diamond will sparkle and the rose will be fragrant, otherwise it is no diamond or rose. The great may well condescend to be humble to genius, since genius pays its homage in becoming proud of that humility. Cardinal Richelieu was mortified at the celebrity of the unbending Corneille; so were several noblemen at Pope's indifference to their rank; and Magliabechi, the book prodigy of his age, whom every literary stranger visited at Florence, assured Lord Raley that the Duke of Tuscany had become jealous of the attention he was receiving from foreigners, as they usually went to visit Magliabechi before the Grand Duke.

A confession by Montesquieu states, with open can-

dour, a fact in his life which confirms this jealousy of the great with the literary character. "On my entering into life I was spoken of as a man of talents, and people of condition gave me a favourable reception; but when the success of my Persian Letters proved perhaps that I was not unworthy of my reputation, and the public began to esteem me, *my reception with the great was discouraging, and I experienced innumerable mortifications.*" Montesquieu subjoins a reflection sufficiently humiliating for the mere nobleman: "The great, inwardly wounded with the glory of a celebrated name, seek to humble it. In general he only can patiently endure the fame of others, who deserves fame himself." This sort of jealousy unquestionably prevailed in the late Lord Orford, a wit, a man of the world, and a man of rank; but while he considered literature as a mere amusement, he was mortified at not obtaining literary celebrity; he felt his authorial always beneath his personal character. It fell to my lot to develope his real feelings respecting himself and the literary men of his age.*

Who was the dignified character, Lord Chesterfield or Samuel Johnson, when the great author, proud of his protracted and vast labour, rejected his lordship's tardy and trivial patronage?† "I value myself," says Swift,

* "Calamities of Authors." I printed, in 1812, extracts from Walpole's correspondence with Cole. Some have considered that there was a severity of delineation in my character of Horace Walpole. I was the *first*, in my impartial view of his literary character, to proclaim to the world what it has now fully sanctioned, that "His most pleasing, if not his great talent, lay in *letter-writing;* here he was without a rival. His correspondence abounded with literature, criticism, and wit of the most original and brilliant composition." This was published several years before the recent collection of his letters.

† Johnson had originally submitted the plan of his "Dictionary" to Lord Chesterfield, but received no mark of interest or sympathy during its weary progress; when the moment of publication approached, his lordship, perhaps in the hope of earning a dedication, published in *The World* two letters commending Johnson and his labours. It was

"upon making the ministry desire to be acquainted with Parnell, and not Parnell with the ministry." Piron would not suffer the literary character to be lowered in his presence. Entering the apartment of a nobleman, who was conducting another peer to the stairs-head, the latter stopped to make way for Piron: "Pass on, my lord," said the noble master; "pass, he is only a poet." Piron replied, "Since our qualities are declared, I shall take my rank," and placed himself before the lord. Nor is this pride, the true source of elevated character, refused to the great artist as well as the great author. Michael Angelo, invited by Julius II. to the court of Rome, found that intrigue had indisposed his holiness towards him, and more than once the great artist was suffered to linger in attendance in the antechamber. One day the indignant man of genius exclaimed, "Tell his holiness, if he wants me, he must look for me elsewhere." He flew back to his beloved Florence, to proceed with that celebrated cartoon which afterwards became a favourite study with all artists. Thrice the Pope wrote for his return, and at length menaced the little State of Tuscany with war, if Michael Angelo prolonged his absence. He returned. The sublime artist knelt at the foot of the Father of the Church, turning aside his troubled countenance in silence. An intermeddling bishop offered himself as a mediator, apologising for our artist by observing, "Of this proud humour are these painters made!" Julius turned to this pitiable mediator, and, as Vasari tells, used a switch on this occasion, ob-

this notice that produced Johnson's celebrated letter, in which he asks,—"Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground encumbers him with help? The notice you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early had been kind, but it has been delayed till I am indifferent and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it."—Ed.

serving, "You speak injuriously of him, while I am silent. It is you who are ignorant." Raising Michael Angelo, Julius II. embraced the man of genius.

"I can make lords of you every day, but I cannot create a Titian," said the Emperor Charles V. to his courtiers, who had become jealous of the hours and the half-hours which the monarch stole from them that he might converse with the man of genius at his work. There is an elevated intercourse between power and genius; and if they are deficient in reciprocal esteem, neither are great. The intellectual nobility seems to have been asserted by De Harlay, a great French statesman; for when the Academy was once not received with royal honours, he complained to the French monarch, observing, that when "a man of letters was presented to Francis I. for the first time, the king always advanced three steps from the throne to receive him." It is something more than an ingenious thought, when Fontenelle, in his *éloge* on Leibnitz, alluding to the death of Queen Anne, adds of her successor, that "The Elector of Hanover united under his dominion an electorate, the three kingdoms of Great Britain, and Leibnitz and Newton."*

If ever the voice of individuals can recompense a life of literary labour, it is in speaking a foreign accent. This sounds like the distant plaudit of posterity. The distance of space between the literary character and the inquirer, in some respects represents the distance of time which separates the author from the next age. Fontenelle was never more gratified than when a Swede, arriving at the gates of Paris, inquired of the custom-house

* This greatness of intellect that glorifies a court, however small, is well instanced in that at Weimar, where the Duke Frederic surrounded himself with the first men in Germany. It was the chosen residence and burial-place of Herder; the birth-place of Kotzebue. Here also Wieland resided for many years; and in the vaults of the ducal chapel the ashes of Schiller repose by those of Goethe, who for more than half a century assisted in the councils, and adorned the court of Weimar.—Ed.

officers where Fontenelle resided, and expressed his indignation that not one of them had ever heard of his name. Hobbes expresses his proud delight that his portrait was sought after by foreigners, and that the Great Duke of Tuscany made the philosopher the object of his first inquiries. Camden was not insensible to the visits of German noblemen, who were desirous of seeing the British Pliny; and Pocock, while he received no aid from patronage at home for his Oriental studies, never relaxed in those unrequited labours, animated by the learned foreigners, who hastened to see and converse with this prodigy of Eastern learning.

Yes! to the very presence of the man of genius will the world spontaneously pay their tribute of respect, of admiration, or of love. Many a pilgrimage has he lived to receive, and many a crowd has followed his footsteps! There are days in the life of genius which repay its sufferings. Demosthenes confessed he was pleased when even a fishwoman of Athens pointed him out. Corneille had his particular seat in the theatre, and the audience would rise to salute him when he entered. At the presence of Raynal in the House of Commons, the Speaker was requested to suspend the debate till that illustrious foreigner, who had written on the English parliament, was accommodated with a seat. Spinosa, when he gained an humble livelihood by grinding optical glasses, at an obscure village in Holland, was visited by the first general in Europe, who, for the sake of this philosophical conference, suspended the march of the army.

In all ages and in all countries has this feeling been created. It is neither a temporary ebullition nor an individual honour. It comes out of the heart of man. It is the passion of great souls. In Spain, whatever was most beautiful in its kind was described by the name of the great Spanish bard:* everything excellent was called

* Lope de Vega.

a Lope. Italy would furnish a volume of the public honours decreed to literary men; nor is that spirit extinct, though the national character has fallen by the chance of fortune. Metastasio and Tiraboschi received what had been accorded to Petrarch and to Poggio. Germany, patriotic to its literary characters, is the land of the enthusiasm of genius. On the borders of the Linnet, in the public walk of Zurich, the monument of Gesner, erected by the votes of his fellow-citizens, attests their sensibility; and a solemn funeral honoured the remains of Klopstock, led by the senate of Hamburgh, with fifty thousand votaries, so penetrated by one universal sentiment, that this multitude preserved a mournful silence, and the interference of the police ceased to be necessary through the city at the solemn burial of the man of genius. Has even Holland proved insensible? The statue of Erasmus, in Rotterdam, still animates her young students, and offers a noble example to her neighbours of the influence even of the sight of the statue of a man of genius. Travellers never fail to mention Erasmus when Basle occupies their recollections; so that, as Bayle observes, "He has rendered the place of his death as celebrated as that of his birth." In France, since Francis I. created genius, and Louis XIV. protected it, the impulse has been communicated to the French people. There the statues of their illustrious men spread inspiration on the spots which living they would have haunted:—in their theatres, the great dramatists; in their Institute their illustrious authors; in their public edifices, congenial men of genius.* This is worthy of the coun-

*We cannot bury the fame of our English worthies—that exists before us, independent of ourselves; but we bury the influence of their inspiring presence in those immortal memorials of genius easy to be read by all men—their statues and their busts, consigning them to spots seldom visited, and often too obscure to be viewed. [We have recent evidence of a more noble acknowledgment of our great men. The

try which privileged the family of La Fontaine to be for ever exempt from taxes, and decreed that "the productions of the mind were not seizable," when the creditors of Crebillon would have attached the produce of his tragedies.

These distinctive honours accorded to genius were in unison with their decree respecting the will of Bayle. It was the subject of a lawsuit between the heir of the will and the inheritor by blood. The latter contested that this great literary character, being a fugitive for religion, and dying in a proscribed country, was divested by law of the power to dispose of his property, and that our author, when resident in Holland, in a civil sense was dead. In the Parliament of Toulouse the judge decided that learned men are free in all countries: that he who had sought in a foreign land an asylum from his love of letters, was no fugitive; that it was unworthy of France to treat as a stranger a son in whom she gloried, and he protested against the notion of a civil death to such a man as Bayle, whose name was living throughout Europe. This judicial decision in France was in unison with that of the senate of Rotterdam, who declared of the emigrant Bayle, that "such a man should not be considered as a foreigner."

Even the most common objects are consecrated when associated with the memory of the man of genius. We still seek for his tomb on the spot where it has vanished. The enthusiasts of genius still wander on the hills of Pausilippo, and muse on Virgil to retrace his landscape. There is a grove at Magdalen College which retains the name of Addison's walk, where still the student will linger; and there is a cave at Macao, which is still visited by the Portuguese from a national feeling, for Camoens there

statue of Dr. Jenner is placed in Trafalgar Square; and Grantham has now a noble work to commemorate its great townsman, Sir Isaac Newton.]

passed many days in composing his Lusiad. When Petrarch was passing by his native town, he was received with the honours of his fame; but when the heads of the town conducted Petrarch to the house where the poet was born, and informed him that the proprietor had often wished to make alterations, but that the townspeople had risen to insist that the house which was consecrated by the birth of Petrarch should be preserved unchanged; this was a triumph more affecting to Petrarch than his coronation at Rome.*

In the village of Certaldo is still shown the house of Boccaccio; and on a turret are seen the arms of the Medici, which they had sculptured there, with an inscription alluding to a small house and a name which filled the world; and in Ferrara, the small house which Ariosto built was purchased, to be preserved, by the municipality, and there they still show the poet's study; and under his bust a simple but affecting tribute to genius records that "Ludovico Ariosto in this apartment wrote." Two hundred and eighty years after the death of the divine poet it was purchased by the *podesta*, with the money of the *commune*, that "the public veneration may be maintained."† "Foreigners," says Anthony Wood of Milton, "have, out of pure devotion, gone to Bread-street to see the house and chamber where he was born;" and at Paris

* On this passage I find a remarkable manuscript note by Lord Byron:—"It would have pained me more that 'the proprietor' should have 'often wished to make alterations, than it could give pleasure that the rest of Arezzo rose against his *right* (for *right* he had); the depreciation of the lowest of mankind is more painful than the applause of the highest is pleasing; the sting of a scorpion is more in torture than the possession of anything could be in rapture."

† A public subscription secured the house in which Shakspeare was born at Stratford-on-Avon. Durer's house, at Nuremberg, is still religiously preserved, and its features are unaltered. The house in which Michael Angelo resided at Florence is also carefully guarded, and the rooms are still in the condition in which they were left by the great master.—Ed.

the house which Voltaire inhabited, and at Ferney his study, are both preserved inviolate. In the study of Montesquieu at La Brede, near Bordeaux, the proprietor has preserved all the furniture, without altering anything, that the apartment where this great man meditated on his immortal work should want for nothing to assist the reveries of the spectator; and on the side of the chimney is still seen a place which while writing he was accustomed to rub his feet against, as they rested on it. In a keep or dungeon of this feudal *château*, the local association suggested to the philosopher his chapter on "The Liberty of the Citizen." It is the second chapter of the twelfth book, of which the close is remarkable.

Let us regret that the little villa of Pope, and the poetic Leasowes of Shenstone, have fallen the victims of property as much as if destroyed by the barbarous hand which cut down the consecrated tree of Shakspeare. The very apartment of a man of genius, the chair he studied in, the table he wrote on, are contemplated with curiosity; the spot is full of local impressions. And all this happens from an unsatisfied desire to see and hear him whom we never can see nor hear; yet, in a moment of illusion, if we listen to a traditional conversation, if we can revive one of his feelings, if we can catch but a dim image, we reproduce this man of genius before us, on whose features we so often dwell. Even the rage of the military spirit has taught itself to respect the abode of genius; and Cæsar and Sylla, who never spared the blood of their own Rome, alike felt their spirit rebuked, and alike saved the literary city of Athens. Antiquity has preserved a beautiful incident of this nature, in the noble reply of the artist Protogenes. When the city of Rhodes was taken by Demetrius, the man of genius was discovered in his garden, tranquilly finishing a picture. "How is it that you do not participate in the general alarm?" asked the conqueror. "Demetrius, you war against the Rhodians, but

not against the fine arts," replied the man of genius. Demetrius had already shown this by his conduct, for he forbade firing that part of the city where the artist resided.

The house of the man of genius has been spared amidst contending empires, from the days of Pindar to those of Buffon; "the Historian of Nature's" château was preserved from this elevated feeling by Prince Schwartzenberg, as our Marlborough had performed the same glorious office in guarding the hallowed asylum of Fenelon.* In the grandeur of Milton's verse we perceive the feeling he associated with this literary honour:

> The great Emathian conqueror bid spare
> The house of Pindarus when temple and tower
> Went to the ground————.

And the meanest things, the very household stuff, associated with the memory of the man of genius, become the objects of our affections. At a festival, in honour of Thomson, the poet, the chair in which he composed part of his "Seasons" was produced, and appears to have communicated some of the raptures to which he was liable who had sat in that chair. Rabelais, amongst his drollest inventions, could not have imagined that his old cloak would have been preserved in the university of Montpelier for future doctors to wear on the day they took their degree; nor could Shakspeare have supposed, with all his fancy, that the mulberry-tree which he planted would have been multiplied into relics. But in such instances the feeling is right, with a wrong direction; and while the populace are exhausting their emotions on an old tree, an old chair, and an old cloak, they are paying that in-

* The printing office of Plantyn, at Antwerp, was guarded in a similar manner, during the great revolution that separated Holland and Belgium, when a troop of soldiers were stationed in its courtyard. See "Curiosities of Literature," vol. i., p. 77, *note* – Ed.

voluntary tribute to genius which forms its pride, and will generate the race.

CHAPTER XXV.

Influence of Authors on society, and of society on Authors.—National tastes a source of literary prejudices.—True Genius always the organ of its nation.—Master-writers preserve the distinct national character.—Genius the organ of the state of the age.—Causes of its suppression in a people.—Often invented, but neglected.—The natural gradations of genius.—Men of Genius produce their usefulness in privacy.—The public mind is now the creation of the public writer.—Politicians affect to deny this principle.—Authors stand between the governors and the governed.—A view of the solitary Author in his study.—They create an epoch in history.—Influence of popular Authors.—The immortality of thought.—The Family of Genius illustrated by their genealogy.

LITERARY fame, which is the sole preserver of all other fame, participates little, and remotely, in the remuneration and the honours of professional characters. All other professions press more immediately on the wants and attentions of men, than the occupations of LITERARY CHARACTERS, who from their habits are secluded; producing their usefulness often at a late period of life, and not always valued by their own generation.

It is not the commercial character of a nation which inspires veneration in mankind, nor will its military power engage the affections of its neighbours. So late as in 1700 the Italian Gemelli told all Europe that he could find nothing among us but our *writings* to distinguish us from a people of barbarians. It was long considered that our genius partook of the density and variableness of our climate, and that we were incapacitated even by situation from the enjoyments of those beautiful arts which have not yet travelled to us—as if

Nature herself had designed to disjoin us from more polished nations and brighter skies.

At length we have triumphed! Our philosophers, our poets, and our historians, are printed at foreign presses. This is a perpetual victory, and establishes the ascendancy of our genius, as much at least as the commerce and the prowess of England. This singular revolution in the history of the human mind, and by its reaction this singular revolution in human affairs, was effected by a glorious succession of authors, who have enabled our nation to arbitrate among the nations of Europe, and to possess ourselves of their involuntary esteem by discoveries in science, by principles in philosophy, by truths in history, and even by the graces of fiction; and there is not a man of genius among foreigners who stands unconnected with our intellectual sovereignty. Even had our country displayed more limited resources than its awful powers have opened, and had the sphere of its dominion been enclosed by its island boundaries, if the same *national literary character* had predominated, we should have stood on the same eminence among our Continental rivals. The small cities of Athens and of Florence will perpetually attest the influence of the literary character over other nations. The one received the tribute of the mistress of the universe, when the Romans sent their youth to be educated at the Grecian city, while the other, at the revival of letters, beheld every polished European crowding to its little court.

In closing this imperfect work by attempting to ascertain the real influence of authors on society, it will be necessary to notice some curious facts in the history of genius.

The distinct literary tastes of different nations, and the repugnance they mutually betray for the master-writers of each other, is an important circumstance to the philosophical observer. These national tastes originate

in modes of feeling, in customs, in idioms, and all the numerous associations prevalent among every people. The reciprocal influence of manners on taste, and of taste on manners—of government and religion on the literature of a people, and of their literature on the national character, with other congenial objects of inquiry, still require a more ample investigation. Whoever attempts to reduce this diversity, and these strong contrasts of national tastes to one common standard, by forcing such dissimilar objects into comparative parallels, or by trying them by conventional principles and arbitrary regulations, will often condemn what in truth his mind is inadequate to comprehend, and the experience of his associations to combine.

These attempts have been the fertile source in literature of what may be called national prejudices. The French nation insists that the northerns are defective in taste—the taste, they tell us, which is established at Paris, and which existed at Athens: the Gothic imagination of the north spurns at the timid copiers of the Latin classics, and interminable disputes prevail in their literature, as in their architecture and their painting. Philosophy discovers a fact of which taste seems little conscious; it is, that genius varies with the soil, and produces a nationality of taste. The feelings of mankind indeed have the same common source, but they must come to us through the medium and by the modifications of society. Love is a universal passion, but the poetry of love in different nations is peculiar to each; for every great poet belongs to his country. Petrarch, Lope de Vega, Racine, Shakspeare, and Sadi, would each express this universal passion by the most specific differences; and the style that would be condemned as unnatural by one people, might be habitual with another. The *concetti* of the Italian, the figurative style of the Persian, the swelling grandeur of the Spaniard, the

classical correctness of the French, are all modifications of genius, relatively true to each particular writer. On national tastes critics are but wrestlers: the Spaniard will still prefer his Lope de Vega to the French Racine, or the English his Shakspeare, as the Italian his Tasso and his Petrarch. Hence all national writers are studied with enthusiasm by their own people, and their very peculiarities, offensive to others, with the natives constitute their excellences. Nor does this perpetual contest about the great writers of other nations solely arise from an association of patriotic glory, but really because these great native writers have most strongly excited the sympathies and conformed to the habitual tastes of their own people.

Hence, then, we deduce that true genius is the organ of its nation. The creative faculty is itself created; for it is the nation which first imparts an impulse to the character of genius. Such is the real source of those distinct tastes which we perceive in all great national authors. Every literary work, to ensure its success, must adapt itself to the sympathies and the understandings of the people it addresses. Hence those opposite characteristics, which are usually ascribed to the master-writers themselves, originate with the country, and not with the writer. Lope de Vega, and Calderon, in their dramas, and Cervantes, who has left his name as the epithet of a peculiar grave humour, were Spaniards before they were men of genius. Corneille, Racine, and Rabelais, are entirely of an opposite character to the Spaniards, having adapted their genius to their own declamatory and vivacious countrymen. Petrarch and Tasso display a fancifulness in depicting the passions, as Boccaccio narrates his facetious stories, quite distinct from the inventions and style of northern writers. Shakspeare is placed at a wider interval from all of them than they are from each other, and is as perfectly insular

in his genius as his own countrymen were in their customs, and their modes of thinking and feeling.

Thus the master-writers of every people preserve the distinct national character in their works; and hence that extraordinary enthusiasm with which every people read their own favourite authors; but in which others cannot participate, and for which, with all their national prejudices, they often recriminate on each other with false and even ludicrous criticism.

But genius is not only the organ of its nation, it is also that of the state of the times; and a great work usually originates in the age. Certain events must precede the man of genius, who often becomes only the vehicle of public feeling. Machiavel has been reproached for propagating a political system subversive of all human honour and happiness; but was it Machiavel who formed his age, or the age which created Machiavel? Living among the petty principalities of Italy, where stratagem and assassination were the practices of those wretched courts, what did that calumniated genius more than lift the veil from a cabinet of banditti? Machiavel alarmed the world by exposing a system subversive of all human virtue and happiness, and, whether he meant it or not, certainly led the way to political freedom. On the same principle we may learn that Boccaccio would not have written so many indecent tales had not the scandalous lives of the monks engaged public attention. This we may now regret; but the court of Rome felt the concealed satire, and that luxurious and numerous class in society never recovered from the chastisement.

Montaigne has been censured for his universal scepticism, and for the unsettled notions he drew out on his motley page, which has been attributed to his incapacity of forming decisive opinions. "Que sçais-je?" was his motto. The same accusation may reach the gentle Erasmus, who alike offended the old catholics and the new

reformers. The real source of their vacillations we may discover in the age itself. It was one of controversy and of civil wars, when the minds of men were thrown into perpetual agitation, and opinions, like the victories of the parties, were every day changing sides.

Even in its advancement beyond the intelligence of its own age genius is but progressive. In nature all is continuous; she makes no starts and leaps. Genius is said to soar, but we should rather say that genius climbs. Did the great Verulam, or Rawleigh, or Dr. More, emancipate themselves from all the dreams of their age, from the occult agency of witchcraft, the astral influence, and the ghost and demon creed?

Before a particular man of genius can appear, certain events must arise to prepare the age for him. A great commercial nation, in the maturity of time, opened all the sources of wealth to the contemplation of Adam Smith. That extensive system of what is called political economy could not have been produced at any other time; for before this period the materials of this work had but an imperfect existence, and the advances which this sort of science had made were only partial and preparatory. If the principle of Adam Smith's great work seems to confound the happiness of a nation with its wealth, we can scarcely reproach the man of genius, who we shall find is always reflecting back the feelings of his own nation, even in his most original speculations.

In works of pure imagination we trace the same march of the human intellect; and we discover in those inventions, which appear sealed by their originality, how much has been derived from the age and the people in which they were produced. Every work of genius is tinctured by the feelings, and often originates in the events, of the times. The *Inferno* of Dante was caught from the popular superstitions of the age, and had been preceded by the gross visions which the monks had forged, usually

for their own purposes. "La Città dolente," and "la perduta gente," were familar to the imaginations of the people, by the monkish visions, and it seems even by ocular illusions of Hell, exhibited in Mysteries, with its gulfs of flame, and its mountains of ice, and the shrieks of the condemned.* To produce the "Inferno" only required the giant step of genius, in the sombre, the awful, and the fierce, Dante. When the age of chivalry flourished, all breathed of love and courtesy; the great man was the great lover, and the great author the romancer. It was from his own age that Milton derived his greatest blemish—the introduction of school-divinity into poetry. In a polemical age the poet, as well as the sovereign, reflected the reigning tastes.

There are accidents to which genius is liable, and by which it is frequently suppressed in a people. The establishment of the Inquisition in Spain at one stroke annihilated all the genius of the country. Cervantes said that the Inquisition had spoilt many of his most delightful inventions; and unquestionably it silenced the wit and invention of a nation whose proverbs attest they possessed them even to luxuriance. All the continental nations have boasted great native painters and architects, while these arts were long truly foreign to us. Theoretical critics, at a loss to account for this singularity, accused not only our climate, but even our diet, as the occult causes of our unfitness to cultivate them. Yet Montesquieu and Winkelmann might have observed that the air of fens and marshes had not deprived the gross feeders of Holland and Flanders of admirable artists. We have been outrageously calumniated. So far from

* Sismondi relates that the bed of the river Arno, at Florence, was transformed into a representation of the Gulf of Hell, in the year 1304; and that all the variety of suffering that monkish imagination had invented was apparently inflicted on real persons, whose shrieks and groans gave fearful reality to the appalling scene.—Ed.

any national incapacity, or obtuse feelings, attaching to ourselves in respect to these arts, the noblest efforts had long been made, not only by individuals, but by the magnificence of Henry VIII., who invited to his court Raphael and Titian; but unfortunately only obtained Holbein. A later sovereign, Charles the First, not only possessed galleries of pictures, and was the greatest purchaser in Europe, for he raised their value, but he likewise possessed the taste and the science of the connoisseur. Something, indeed, had occurred to our national genius, which had thrown it into a stupifying state, from which it is yet hardly aroused. Could those foreign philosophers have ascended to moral causes, instead of vapouring forth fanciful notions, they might have struck at the true cause of the deficiency in our national genius. The jealousy of puritanic fanaticism had persecuted these arts from the first rise of the Reformation in this country. It had not only banished them from our churches and altar-pieces, but the fury of the people, and the "wisdom" of parliament, had alike combined to mutilate and even efface what little remained of painting and sculpture among us. Even within our own times this deadly hostility to art was not extinct; for when a proposal was made gratuitously to decorate our places of worship by a series of religious pictures, and English artists, in pure devotion to Art, zealous to confute the Continental calumniators, asked only for walls to cover, George the Third highly approved of the plan. The design was put aside, as some had a notion that the cultivation of the fine arts in our naked churches was a return to Catholicism. Had this glorious plan been realized, the golden age of English art might have arisen. Every artist would have invented a subject most congenial to his powers. Reynolds would have emulated Raphael in the Virgin and Child in the manger, West had fixed on Christ raising the young man from the dead, Barry had

profoundly meditated on the Jews rejecting Jesus. Thus did an age of genius perish before its birth! It was on the occasion of this frustrated project that Barry, in the rage of disappointment, immortalised himself by a gratuitous labour of seven years on the walls of the Society of Arts, for which, it is said, the French government under Buonaparte offered ten thousand pounds.

Thus also it has happened, that we have possessed among ourselves great architects, although opportunities for displaying their genius have been rare. This the fate and fortune of two Englishmen attest. Without the fire of London we might not have shown the world one of the greatest architects, in Sir Christopher Wren; had not a St. Paul's been required by the nation he would have found no opportunity of displaying the magnificence of his genius, which even then was mutilated, as the original model bears witness to the world. That great occasion served this noble architect to multiply his powers in other public edifices: and it is here worth remarking that, had not Charles II. been seized by apoplexy, the royal residence, which was begun at Winchester on a plan of Sir Christopher Wren's, by its magnificence would have raised a Versailles for England.

The fate of Inigo Jones is as remarkable as that of Wren. Whitehall afforded a proof to foreigners that among a people which, before that edifice appeared, was reproached for their total deficiency of feeling for the pure classical style of architecture, the true taste could nevertheless exist. This celebrated piece of architecture, however, is but a fragment of a grander composition, by which, had not the civil wars intervened, the fame of Britain would have balanced the glory of Greece, or Italy, or France, and would have shown that our country is more deficient in marble than in genius. Thus the fire of London produces a St. Paul's, and the civil

wars suppress a Whitehall. Such circumstances in the history of art among nations have not always been developed by those theorists who have calumniated the artists of England.

In the history of genius it is remarkable that its work is often invented, and lies neglected. A close observer of this age pointed out to me that the military genius of that great French captain, who so long appeared to have conquered Europe, was derived from his applying the new principles of war discovered by Folard and Guibert. The genius of Folard observed that, among the changes of military discipline in the practice of war among European nations since the introduction of gunpowder, one of the ancient methods of the Romans had been improperly neglected, and, in his Commentaries on Polybius, Folard revived this forgotten mode of warfare. Guibert, in his great work, "Histoire de la Milice Française," or rather the History of the Art of War, adopted Folard's system of charging by columns, and breaking the centre of the enemy, which seems to be the famous plan of our Rodney and Nelson in their maritime battles. But this favourite plan became the ridicule of the military; and the boldness of his pen, with the high confidence of the author, only excited adversaries to mortify his pretensions, and to treat him as a dreamer. From this perpetual opposition to his plans, and the neglect he incurred, Guibert died of "vexation of spirit;" and the last words on the death-bed of this man of genius were, "One day they will know me!" Folard and Guibert created a Buonaparte, who studied them on the field of battle; and he who would trace the military genius who so long held in suspense the fate of the world, may discover all that he performed in the neglected inventions of preceding genius.

Hence also may we deduce the natural gradations of genius. Many men of genius must arise before a particu-

lar man of genius can appear. Before Homer there were other epic poets; a catalogue of their names and their works has come down to us. Corneille could not have been the chief dramatist of France had not the founders of the French drama preceded him, and Pope could not have preceded Dryden. It was in the nature of things that a Giotto and a Cimabue should have preceded a Raphael and a Michael Angelo.

Even the writings of such extravagant geniuses as Bruno and Cardan gave indications of the progress of the human mind; and had Ramus not shaken the authority of the *Organon* of Aristotle we might not have had the *Novum Organon* of Bacon. Men slide into their degree in the scale of genius often by the exercise of a single quality which their predecessors did not possess, or by completing what at first was left imperfect. Truth is a single point in knowledge, as beauty is in art: ages revolve till a Newton and a Locke accomplish what an Aristotle and a Descartes began. The old theory of animal spirits, observes Professor Dugald Stewart, was applied by Descartes to explain the mental phenomena which led Newton into that train of thinking, which served as the groundwork of Hartley's theory of vibrations. The learning of one man makes others learned, and the influence of genius is in nothing more remarkable than in its effects on its brothers. Selden's treatise on the Syrian and Arabian Deities enabled Milton to comprise, in one hundred and thirty beautiful lines, the two large and learned syntagma which Selden had composed on that abstract subject. Leland, the father of British antiquities, impelled Stowe to work on his "Survey of London;" and Stowe's "London" inspired Camden's stupendous "Britannia." Herodotus produced Thucydides, and Thucydides Xenophon. With us Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon rose almost simultaneously by mutual inspiration. There exists a perpetual action and reaction in

the history of the human mind. It has frequently been inquired why certain periods seem to have been more favourable to a particular class of genius than another; or, in other words, why men of genius appear in clusters. We have theories respecting barren periods, which are only satisfactorily accounted for by moral causes. Genius generates enthusiasm and rivalry; but, having reached the meridian of its class, we find that there can be no progress in the limited perfection of human nature. All excellence in art, if it cannot advance, must decline.

Important discoveries are often obtained by accident; but the single work of a man of genius, which has at length changed the character of a people, and even of an age, is slowly matured in meditation. Even the mechanical inventions of genius must first become perfect in its own solitary abode ere the world can possess them. Men of genius then produce their usefulness in privacy; but it may not be of immediate application, and is often undervalued by their own generation.

The influence of authors is so great, while the author himself is so inconsiderable, that to some the cause may not appear commensurate to its effect. When Epicurus published his doctrines, men immediately began to express themselves with freedom on the established religion, and the dark and fearful superstitions of paganism, falling into neglect, mouldered away. If, then, before the art of multiplying the productions of the human mind existed, the doctrines of a philosopher in manuscript or by lecture could diffuse themselves throughout a literary nation, it will baffle the algebraist of metaphysics to calculate the unknown quantities of the propagation of human thought. There are problems in metaphysics, as well as in mathematics, which can never be resolved.

A small portion of mankind appears marked out by nature and by study for the purpose of cultivating their thoughts in peace, and of giving activity to their discov

eries, by disclosing them to the people. "Could I," exclaims Montesquieu, whose heart was beating with the feelings of a great author, "could I but afford new reasons to men to love their duties, their king, their country, their laws, that they might become more sensible of their happiness under every government they live, and in every station they occupy, I should deem myself the happiest of men!" Such was the pure aspiration of the great author who studied to preserve, by ameliorating, the humane fabric of society. The same largeness of mind characterises all the eloquent friends of the human race. In an age of religious intolerance it inspired the President De Thou to inculcate, from sad experience and a juster view of human nature, the impolicy as well as the inhumanity of religious persecutions, in that dedication to Henry IV., which Lord Mansfield declared he could never read without rapture. "I was not born for myself alone, but for my country and my friends!" exclaimed the genius which hallowed the virtuous pages of his immortal history.

Even our liberal yet dispassionate Locke restrained the freedom of his inquiries, and corrected the errors which the highest intellect may fall into, by marking out that impassable boundary which must probably for ever limit all human intelligence; for the maxim which Locke constantly inculcates is that "Reason must be the last judge and guide in everything." A final answer to those who propagate their opinions, whatever they may be, with a sectarian spirit, to force the understandings of other men to their own modes of belief, and their own variable opinions. This alike includes those who yield up nothing to the genius of their age to correct the imperfections of society, and those who, opposing all human experience, would annihilate what is most admirable in its institutions.

The public mind is the creation of the Master-Writers—an axiom as demonstrable as any in Euclid, and a princi-

ple as sure in its operation as any in mechanics. Bacon's influence over philosophy, and Grotius's over the political state of society, are still felt, and their principles practised far more than in their own age. These men of genius, in their solitude, and with their views not always comprehended by their contemporaries, became themselves the founders of our science and our legislation. When Locke and Montesquieu appeared, the old systems of government were reviewed, the principle of toleration was developed, and the revolutions of opinion were discovered.

A noble thought of Vitruvius, who, of all the authors of antiquity, seems to have been most deeply imbued with the feelings of the literary character, has often struck me by the grandeur and the truth of its conception. "The sentiments of excellent writers," he says, "although their persons be for ever absent, exist in future ages; and in councils and debates are of greater authority than those of the persons who are present."

But politicians affect to disbelieve that abstract principles possess any considerable influence on the conduct of the subject. They tell us that "in times of tranquillity they are not wanted, and in times of confusion they are never heard;" this is the philosophy of men who do not choose that philosophy should disturb their fireside! But it is in leisure, when they are not wanted, that the speculative part of mankind create them, and when they are wanted they are already prepared for the active multitude, who come, like a phalanx, pressing each other with a unity of feeling and an integrity of force. Paley would not close his eyes on what was passing before him; for, he has observed, that during the convulsions at Geneva, the political theory of Rousseau was prevalent in their contests; while, in the political disputes of our country, the ideas of civil authority displayed in the works of Locke recurred in every form. The character of a great author

can never be considered as subordinate in society; nor do politicians secretly think so at the moment they are proclaiming it to the world, for, on the contrary, they consider the worst actions of men as of far less consequence than the propagation of their opinions. Politicians have exposed their disguised terrors. Books, as well as their authors, have been tried and condemned. Cromwell was alarmed when he saw the "Oceana" of Harrington, and dreaded the effects of that volume more than the plots of the Royalists; while Charles II. trembled at an author only in his manuscript state, and in the height of terror, and to the honour of genius, it was decreed, that "Scribere est agere."—"The book of Telemachus," says Madame de Staël, "was a courageous action." To insist with such ardour on the duties of a sovereign, and to paint with such truth a voluptuous reign, disgraced Fenelon at the court of Louis XIV., but the virtuous author raised a statue for himself in all hearts. Massillon's *Petit Carême* was another of these animated recals of man to the sympathies of his nature, which proves the influence of an author; for, during the contests of Louis XV. with the Parliaments, large editions of this book were repeatedly printed and circulated through the kingdom. In such moments it is that a people find and know the value of a great author, whose work is the mighty organ which conveys their voice to their governors.

But, if the influence of benevolent authors over society is great, it must not be forgotten that the abuse of this influence is terrific. Authors preside at a tribunal in Europe which is independent of all the powers of the earth—the tribunal of Opinion! But since, as Sophocles has long declared, "Opinion is stronger than truth," it is unquestionable that the falsest and the most depraved notions are, as long as these opinions maintain their force, accepted as immutable truths; and

the mistakes of one man become the crimes of a whole people.

Authors stand between the governors and the governed, and form the single organ of both. Those who govern a nation cannot at the same time enlighten the people, for the executive power is not empirical; and the governed cannot think, for they have no continuity of leisure. The great systems of thought, and the great discoveries in moral and political philosophy, have come from the solitude of contemplative men, seldom occupied in public affairs or in private employments. The commercial world owes to two retired philosophers, Locke and Smith, those principles which dignify trade into a liberal pursuit, and connect it with the happiness and the glory of a people. A work in France, under the title of "L'Ami des Hommes," by the Marquis of Mirabeau, first spread there a general passion for agricultural pursuits; and although the national ardour carried all to excess in the reveries of the "Economistes," yet marshes were drained and waste lands inclosed. The "Emilius" of Rousseau, whatever may be its errors and extravagances, operated a complete revolution in modern Europe, by communicating a bolder spirit to education, and improving the physical force and character of man. An Italian marquis, whose birth and habits seemed little favourable to study, operated a moral revolution in the administration of the laws. Beccaria dared to plead in favour of humanity against the prejudices of many centuries in his small volume on "Crimes and Punishments," and at length abolished torture; while the French advocates drew their principles from that book, rather than from their national code, and our Blackstone quoted it with admiration! Locke and Voltaire, having written on "Toleration," have long made us tolerant. In all such cases the authors were themselves entirely unconnected with their subjects, except as speculative writers.

Such are the authors who become universal in public opinion; and it then happens that the work itself meets with the singular fate which that great genius Smeaton said happened to his stupendous "Pharos:" "The novelty having yearly worn off, and the greatest real praise of the edifice being that nothing has happened to it—nothing has occurred to keep the talk of it alive." The fundamental principles of such works, after having long entered into our earliest instructions, become unquestionable as self-evident propositions; yet no one, perhaps, at this day can rightly conceive the great merits of Locke's Treatises on "Education," and on "Toleration;" or the philosophical spirit of Montesquieu, and works of this high order, which first diffused a tone of thinking over Europe. The principles have become so incorporated with our judgment, and so interwoven with our feelings, that we can hardly now imagine the fervour they excited at the time, or the magnanimity of their authors in the decision of their opinions. Every first great monument of genius raises a new standard to our knowledge, from which the human mind takes its impulse and measures its advancement. The march of human thought through ages might be indicated by every great work as it is progressively succeeded by others. It stands like the golden milliary column in the midst of Rome, from which all others reckoned their distances.

But a scene of less grandeur, yet more beautiful, is the view of the solitary author himself in his own study—so deeply occupied, that whatever passes before him never reaches his observation, while, working more than twelve hours every day, he still murmurs as the hour strikes; the volume still lies open, the page still importunes—"And whence all this business?" He has made a discovery for us! that never has there been anything important in the active world but what is reflected in the literary—books contain everything, even the falsehoods

and the crimes which have been only projected by man! This solitary man of genius is arranging the materials of instruction and curiosity from every country and every age; he is striking out, in the concussion of new light, a new order of ideas for his own times; he possesses secrets which men hide from their contemporaries, truths they dared not utter, facts they dared not discover. View him in the stillness of meditation, his eager spirit busied over a copious page, and his eye sparkling with gladness! He has concluded what his countrymen will hereafter cherish as the legacy of genius—you see him now changed; and the restlessness of his soul is thrown into his very gestures—could you listen to the vaticinator! But the next age only will quote his predictions. If he be the truly great author, he will be best comprehended by posterity, for the result of ten years of solitary meditation has often required a whole century to be understood and to be adopted. The ideas of Bishop Berkeley, in his "Theory of Vision," were condemned as a philosophical romance, and now form an essential part of every treatise of optics; and "The History of Oracles," by Fontenelle, says La Harpe, which, in his youth, was censured for its impiety, the centenarian lived to see regarded as a proof of his respect for religion.

"But what influence can this solitary man, this author of genius, have on his nation, when he has none in the very street in which he lives? and it may be suspected as little in his own house, whose inmates are hourly practising on the infantine simplicity which marks his character, and that frequent abstraction from what is passing under his own eyes?"

This solitary man of genius is stamping his own character on the minds of his own people. Take one instance, from others far more splendid, in the contrast presented by Franklin and Sir William Jones. The parsimonious habits, the money-getting precepts, the wary

cunning, the little scruple about means, the fixed intent upon the end, of Dr. Franklin, imprinted themselves on his Americans. Loftier feelings could not elevate a man of genius who became the founder of a trading people, and who retained the early habits of a journeyman; while the elegant tastes of Sir William Jones could inspire the servants of a commercial corporation to open new and vast sources of knowledge. A mere company of merchants, influenced by the literary character, enlarges the stores of the imagination and provides fresh materials for the history of human nature.

Franklin, with that calm good sense which is freed from the passion of imagination, has himself declared this important truth relating to the literary character:—"I have always thought that one man of tolerable abilities may work great changes and accomplish great affairs among mankind, if he first forms a good plan; and cutting off all amusements, or other employments that would divert his attention, makes the execution of that same plan his sole study and business." Fontenelle was of the same opinion, for he remarks that "a single great man is sufficient to accomplish a change in the taste of his age." The life of Granville Sharp is a striking illustration of the solitary force of individual character.

It cannot be doubted that the great author, in the solitude of his study, has often created an epoch in the annals of mankind. A single man of genius arose in a barbarous period in Italy, who gave birth not only to Italian, but to European literature. Poet, orator, philosopher, geographer, historian, and antiquary, Petrarch kindled a line of light through his native land, while a crowd of followers hailed their father-genius, who had stamped his character on the age. Descartes, it has been observed, accomplished a change in the taste of his age by the perspicacity and method for which he was in-

debted to his mathematical researches; and "models of metaphysical analysis and logical discussions" in the works of Hume and Smith have had the same influence in the writings of our own time.

Even genius not of the same colossal size may aspire to add to the progressive mass of human improvement by its own single effort. When an author writes on a national subject, he awakens all the knowledge which slumbers in a nation, and calls around him, as it were, every man of talent; and though his own fame may be eclipsed by his successors, yet the emanation, the morning light, broke from his solitary study. Our naturalist, Ray, though no man was more modest in his claims, delighted to tell a friend that "Since the publication of his catalogue of Cambridge plants, many were prompted to botanical studies, and to herbalise in their walks in the fields." Johnson has observed that "An emulation of study was raised by Cheke and Smith, to which even the present age perhaps owes many advantages, without remembering or knowing its benefactors. Rollin is only a compiler of history, and to the antiquary he is nothing! But races yet unborn will be enchanted by that excellent man, in whose works "the heart speaks to the heart," and whom Montesquieu called "The Bee of France." The Bacons, the Newtons, and the Leibnitzes were insulated by their own creative powers, and stood apart from the world, till the dispersers of knowledge became their interpreters to the people, opening a communication between two spots, which, though close to each other, were long separated—the closet and the world! The Addisons, the Fontenelles, and the Feyjoos, the first popular authors in their nations who taught England, France, and Spain to become a reading people, while their fugitive page imbues with intellectual sweetness every uncultivated mind, like the perfumed mould taken up by the Persian swimmer. "It was but a

piece of common earth, but so delicate was its fragrance, that he who found it, in astonishment asked whether it were musk or amber. 'I am nothing but earth; but roses were planted in my soil, and their odorous virtues have deliciously penetrated through all my pores: I have retained the infusion of sweetness, otherwise I had been but a lump of earth!'"

I have said that authors produce their usefulness in privacy, and that their good is not of immediate application, and often unvalued by their own generation. On this occasion the name of Evelyn always occurs to me. This author supplied the public with nearly thirty works, at a time when taste and curiosity were not yet domiciliated in our country; his patriotism warmed beyond the eightieth year of his age, and in his dying hand he held another legacy for his nation. Evelyn conveys a pleasing idea of his own works and their design. He first taught his countrymen how to plant, then to build: and having taught them to be useful *without doors*, he then attempted to divert and occupy them *within doors*, by his treatises on chalcography, painting, medals, libraries. It was during the days of destruction and devastation both of woods and buildings, the civil wars of Charles the First, that a solitary author was projecting to make the nation delight in repairing their evil, by inspiring them with the love of agriculture and architecture. Whether his enthusiasm was introducing to us a taste for medals and prints, or intent on purifying the city from smoke and nuisances, and sweetening it by plantations of native plants, after having enriched our orchards and our gardens, placed summer-ices on our tables, and varied even the salads of our country; furnishing "a Gardener's Kalendar," which, as Cowley said, was to last as long "as months and years;" whether the philosopher of the Royal Society, or the lighter satirist of the toilet, or the fine moralist for active as well as contemplative

life—in all these changes of a studious life, the better part of his history has not yet been told. While Britain retains her awful situation among the nations of Europe, the "Sylva" of Evelyn will endure with her triumphant oaks. In the third edition of that work the heart of the patriot expands at its result; he tells Charles II. "how many millions of timber trees, besides infinite others, have been propagated and planted *at the instigation and by the sole direction of this work.*" It was an author in his studious retreat who, casting a prophetic eye on the age we live in, secured the late victories of our naval sovereignty. Inquire at the Admiralty how the fleets of Nelson have been constructed, and they can tell you that it was with the oaks which the genius of Evelyn planted.*

The same character existed in France, where De Serres, in 1599, composed a work on the cultivation of mulberry-trees, in reference to the art of raising silk-worms. He taught his fellow-citizens to convert a leaf into silk, and silk to become the representative of gold. Our author encountered the hostility of the prejudices of his times, even from Sully, in giving his country one of her staple commodities; but I lately received a medal recently struck in honour of De Serres by the Agricultural Society of the Department of the Seine. We slowly commemorate the intellectual characters of our own country; and our men of genius are still defrauded of the debt we are daily incurring of their posthumous fame. Let monuments be raised and let medals be struck! They are sparks of glory which might be scattered through the next age!

There is a singleness and unity in the pursuits of

* Since this was first printed, the "Diary" of Evelyn has appeared; and although it could not add to his general character, yet I was not too sanguine in my anticipations of the diary of so perfect a literary character, who has shown how his studies were intermingled with the business of life.

genius which is carried on through all ages, and will for ever connect the nations of the earth. THE IMMORTALITY OF THOUGHT EXISTS FOR MAN! The veracity of Herodotus, after more than two thousand years, is now receiving a fresh confirmation. The single and precious idea of genius, however obscure, is eventually disclosed; for original discoveries have often been the developments of former knowledge. The system of the circulation of the blood appears to have been obscurely conjectured by Servetus, who wanted experimental facts to support his hypothesis: Vesalius had an imperfect perception of the right motion of the blood: Cæsalpinus admits a circulation without comprehending its consequences; at length our Harvey, by patient meditation and penetrating sagacity, removed the errors of his predecessors, and demonstrated the true system. Thus, too, Hartley expanded the hint of "the association of ideas" from Locke, and raised a system on what Locke had only used for an accidental illustration. The beautiful theory of vision by Berkeley, was taken up by him just where Locke had dropped it: and as Professor Dugald Stewart describes, by following out his principles to their remoter consequences, Berkeley brought out a doctrine which was as true as it seemed novel. Lydgate's "Fall of Princes," says Mr. Campbell, "probably suggested to Lord Sackville the idea of his "Mirror for Magistrates." The "Mirror for Magistrates" again gave hints to Spenser in allegory, and may also "have possibly suggested to Shakspeare the idea of his historical plays." When indeed we find that that great original, Hogarth, adopted the idea of his "Idle and Industrious Apprentice," from the old comedy of *Eastward Hoe*, we easily conceive that some of the most original inventions of genius, whether the more profound or the more agreeable, may thus be tracked in the snow of time.

In the history of genius therefore there is no

chronology, for to its votaries everything it has done is PRESENT—the earliest attempt stands connected with the most recent. This continuity of ideas characterises the human mind, and seems to yield an anticipation of its immortal nature.

There is a consanguinity in the characters of men of genius, and a genealogy may be traced among their races. Men of genius in their different classes, living at distinct periods, or in remote countries, seem to reappear under another name; and in this manner there exists in the literary character an eternal transmigration. In the great march of the human intellect the same individual spirit seems still occupying the same place, and is still carrying on, with the same powers, his great work through a line of centuries. It was on this principle that one great poet has recently hailed his brother as "the Ariosto of the North," and Ariosto as "the Scott of the South." And can we deny the real existence of the genealogy of genius? Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton! this is a single line of descent!

Aristotle, Hobbes, and Locke, Descartes, and Newton, approximate more than we imagine. The same chain of intellect which Aristotle holds, through the intervals of time, is held by them; and links will only be added by their successors. The naturalists Pliny, Gesner, Aldrovandus, and Buffon, derive differences in their characters from the spirit of the times; but each only made an accession to the family estate, while he was the legitimate representative of the family of the naturalists. Aristophanes, Moliére, and Foote, are brothers of the family of national wits; the wit of Aristophanes was a part of the common property, and Moliére and Foote were Aristophanic. Plutarch, La Mothe le Vayer, and Bayle, alike busied in amassing the materials of human thought and human action, with the same vigorous and vagrant curiosity, must have had the same habits of life. If

Plutarch were credulous, La Mothe Le Vayer sceptical, and Bayle philosophical, all that can be said is, that though the heirs of the family may differ in their dispositions, no one will arraign the integrity of the lineal descent. Varre did for the Romans what Pausanias had done for the Greeks, and Montfaucon for the French, and Camden for ourselves.

My learned and reflecting friend, whose original researches have enriched our national history, has this observation on the character of Wickliffe:—"To complete our idea of the importance of Wickliffe, it is only necessary to add, that as his writings made John Huss the reformer of Bohemia, so the writings of John Huss led Martin Luther to be the reformer of Germany; so extensive and so incalculable are the consequences which sometimes follow from human actions."* Our historian has accompanied this by giving the very feelings of Luther in early life on his first perusal of the works of John Huss; we see the spark of creation caught at the moment: a striking influence of the generation of character! Thus a father-spirit has many sons; and several of the great revolutions in the history of man have been carried on by that secret creation of minds visibly operating on human affairs. In the history of the human mind, he takes an imperfect view, who is confined to contemporary knowledge, as well as he who stops short with the Ancients. Those who do not carry researches through the genealogical lines of genius, mutilate their minds.

Such, then, is the influence of AUTHORS!—those "great lights of the world," by whom the torch of genius has been successively seized and perpetually transferred from hand to hand, in the fleeting scene. Descartes delivers it to Newton, Bacon to Locke; and the continuity of human affairs, through the rapid generations of man, is maintained from age to age!

* Turner's "History of England," vol. ii., p. 432.

LITERARY MISCELLANIES.

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MISCELLANISTS.

MISCELLANISTS are the most popular writers among every people; for it is they who form a communication between the learned and the unlearned, and, as it were, throw a bridge between those two great divisions of the public. Literary Miscellanies are classed among philological studies. The studies of philology formerly consisted rather of the labours of arid grammarians and conjectural critics, than of that more elegant philosophy which has, within our own time, been introduced into literature, and which, by its graces and investigation, augment the beauties of original genius. This delightful province has been termed in Germany the *Æsthetic*, from a Greek term signifying sentiment or feeling. Æsthetic critics fathom the depths, or run with the current of an author's thoughts, and the sympathies of such a critic offer a supplement to the genius of the original writer. Longinus and Addison are Æsthetic critics. The critics of the adverse school always look for a precedent, and if none is found, woe to the originality of a great writer!

Very elaborate criticisms have been formed by eminent writers, in which great learning and acute logic have only betrayed the absence of the Æsthetic faculty. Warburton called Addison an empty superficial writer, destitute himself of an atom of Addison's taste for the beautiful; and Johnson is a flagrant instance that great powers of

reasoning are more fatal to the works of imagination than had ever been suspected.

By one of these learned critics was Montaigne, the venerable father of modern Miscellanies, called "a bold ignorant fellow." To thinking readers, this critical summary will appear mysterious; for Montaigne had imbibed the spirit of all the moral writers of antiquity; and although he has made a capricious complaint of a defective memory, we cannot but wish the complaint had been more real; for we discover in his works such a gathering of knowledge that it seems at times to stifle his own energies. Montaigne was censured by Scaliger, as Addison was censured by Warburton; because both, like Socrates, smiled at that mere erudition which consists of knowing the thoughts of others and having no thoughts of our own. To weigh syllables, and to arrange dates, to adjust texts, and to heap annotations, has generally proved the absence of the higher faculties. When a more adventurous spirit of this herd attempts some novel discovery, often men of taste behold, with indignation, the perversions of their understanding; and a Bentley in his Milton, or a Warburton on a Virgil, had either a singular imbecility concealed under the arrogance of the scholar, or they did not believe what they told the public; the one in his extraordinary invention of an interpolating editor, and the other in his more extraordinary explanation of the Eleusinian mysteries. But what was still worse, the froth of the head became venom, when it reached the heart.

Montaigne has also been censured for an apparent vanity, in making himself the idol of his lucubrations. If he had not done this, he had not performed the promise he makes at the commencement of his preface. An engaging tenderness prevails in these *naïve* expressions which shall not be injured by a version. "Je l'ay voué à la commodité particulière de mes parens et amis; à ce

que m'ayans perdu (ce qu'ils ont à faire bientost) ils y puissent retrouver quelques traicts de mes humeurs, et que par ce moyen ils nourrissent plus entière et plus vifue la conoissance qu'ils ont eu de moi."

Those authors who appear sometimes to forget they are writers, and remember they are men, will be our favourites. He who writes from the heart, will write to the heart; every one is enabled to decide on his merits, and they will not be referred to learned heads, or a distant day. "Why," says Boileau, "are my verses read read by all? it is only because they speak truths, and that I am convinced of the truths I write."

Why have some of our fine writers interested more than others, who have not displayed inferior talents? Why is Addison still the first of our essayists? he has sometimes been excelled in criticisms more philosophical, in topics more interesting, and in diction more coloured. But there is a personal charm in the character he has assumed in his periodical Miscellanies, which is felt with such a gentle force, that we scarce advert to it. He has painted forth his little humours, his individual feelings, and eternised himself to his readers. Johnson and Hawkesworth we receive with respect, and we dismiss with awe; we come from their writings as from public lectures, and from Addison's as from private conversations. Montaigne preferred those of the ancients, who appear to write under a conviction of what they said; the eloquent Cicero declaims but coldly on liberty, while in the impetuous Brutus may be perceived a man who is resolved to purchase it with his life. We know little of Plutarch; yet a spirit of honesty and persuasion in his works expresses a philosophical character capable of imitating, as well as admiring, the virtues he records.

Sterne perhaps derives a portion of his celebrity from the same influence; he interests us in his minutest motions, for he tells us all he feels. Richardson was sensi-

ble of the power with which these minute strokes of description enter the heart, and which are so many fastenings to which the imagination clings. He says, "If I give speeches and conversations, I ought to give them justly; for the humours and characters of persons cannot be known, unless I repeat *what* they say, and their *manner* of saying." I confess I am infinitely pleased when Sir William Temple acquaints us with the size of his orange-trees, and with the flavour of his peaches and grapes, confessed by Frenchmen to equal those of France; with his having had the honour to naturalise in this country four kinds of grapes, with his liberal distribution of them, because "he ever thought all things of this kind the commoner they are the better." In a word, with his passionate attachment to his garden, where he desired his heart to be buried, of his desire to escape from great employments, and having passed five years without going to town, where, by the way, "he had a large house always ready to receive him." Dryden has interspersed many of these little particulars in his prosaic compositions, and I think that his character and dispositions may be more correctly acquired by uniting these scattered notices, than by any biographical account which can now be given of this man of genius.

From this agreeable mode of writing, a species of compositions may be discriminated, which seems above all others to identify the reader with the writer; compositions which are often discovered in a fugitive state, but to which their authors were prompted by the fine impulses of genius, derived from the peculiarity of their situation. Dictated by the heart, or polished with the fondness of delight, these productions are impressed by the seductive eloquence of genius, or attach us by the sensibility of taste. The object thus selected is no task imposed on the mind of the writer for the mere ambition of literature, but is a voluntary effusion, warm with all the sensa-

tions of a pathetic writer. In a word, they are the compositions of genius, on a subject in which it is most deeply interested; which it revolves on all its sides, which it paints in all its tints, and which it finishes with the same ardour it began. Among such works may be placed the exiled Bolingbroke's "Reflections upon Exile;" the retired Petrarch and Zimmerman's Essays on "Solitude;" the imprisoned Boethius's "Consolations of Philosophy;" the oppressed Pierius Valerianus's Catalogue of "Literary Calamities;" the deformed Hay's Essay on "Deformity;" the projecting De Foe's "Essays on Projects;" the liberal Shenstone's Poem on "Economy."

We may respect the profound genius of voluminous writers; they are a kind of painters who occupy great room, and fill up, as a satirist expresses it, "an acre of canvas." But we love to dwell on those more delicate pieces,—a group of Cupids; a Venus emerging from the waves; a Psyche or an Aglaia, which embellish the cabinet of the man of taste.

It should, indeed, be the characteristic of good Miscellanies, to be multifarious and concise. Usbek, the Persian of Montesquieu, is one of the profoundest philosophers, his letters are, however, but concise pages. Rochefoucault and La Bruyère are not superficial observers of human nature, although they have only written sentences. Of Tacitus it has been finely remarked by Montesquieu, that "he abridged everything because he saw everything." Montaigne approves of Plutarch and Seneca, because their loose papers were suited to his dispositions, and where knowledge is acquired without a tedious study. "It is," said he, "no great attempt to take one in hand, and I give over at pleasure, for they have no sequel or connexion." La Fontaine agreeably applauds short compositions:

> Les longs ouvrages me font peur;
> Loin d'épuiser une matière,
> On n'en doit prendre que la fleur;

and Old Francis Osborne has a coarse and ludicrous image in favour of such opuscula; he says, "Huge volumes, like the ox roasted whole at Bartholomew fair, may proclaim plenty of labour and invention, but afford less of what is delicate, savoury, and well concocted, than *smaller pieces.*" To quote so light a genius as the enchanting La Fontaine, and so solid a mind as the sensible Osborne, is taking in all the climates of the human mind; it is touching at the equator, and pushing on to the pole.

Montaigne's works have been called by a cardinal "The Breviary of Idlers." It is therefore the book of man; for all men are idlers; we have hours which we pass with lamentation, and which we know are always returning. At those moments miscellanists are conformable to all our humours. We dart along their airy and concise page; and their lively anecdote or their profound observation are so many interstitial pleasures in our listless hours.

The ancients were great admirers of miscellanies; Aulus Gellius has preserved a copious list of titles of such works. These titles are so numerous, and include such gay and pleasing descriptions, that we may infer by their number that they were greatly admired by the public, and by their titles that they prove the great delight their authors experienced in their composition. Among the titles are "a basket of flowers;" "an embroidered mantle;" and "a variegated meadow." Such a miscellanist as was the admirable Erasmus deserves the happy description which Plutarch with an elegant enthusiasm bestows on Menander: he calls him the delight of philosophers fatigued with study; that they have recourse to his works as to a meadow enamelled with flowers, where the sense is delighted by a purer air; and very elegantly adds, that Menander has a salt peculiar to himself, drawn from the same waters that gave birth to Venus.

The Troubadours, Conteurs, and Jongleurs, practised what is yet called in the southern parts of France, *Le guay Saber*, or the gay science. I consider these as the Miscellanists of their day; they had their grave moralities, their tragical histories, and their sportive tales; their verse and their prose. The village was in motion at their approach; the castle was opened to the ambulatory poets, and the feudal hypochondriac listened to their solemn instruction and their airy fancy. I would call miscellaneous composition LE GUAY SABER, and I would have every miscellaneous writer as solemn and as gay, as various and as pleasing, as these lively artists of versatility.

Nature herself is most delightful in her miscellaneous scenes. When I hold a volume of miscellanies, and run over with avidity the titles of its contents, my mind is enchanted, as if it were placed among the landscapes of Valais, which Rousseau has described with such picturesque beauty. I fancy myself seated in a cottage amid those mountains, those valleys, those rocks, encircled by the enchantments of optical illusion. I look, and behold at once the united seasons—"All climates in one place, all seasons in one instant." I gaze at once on a hundred rainbows, and trace the romantic figures of the shifting clouds. I seem to be in a temple dedicated to the service of the Goddess VARIETY.

PREFACES.

I DECLARE myself infinitely delighted by a preface. Is it exquisitely written? no literary morsel is more delicious. Is the author inveterately dull? it is a kind of preparatory information, which may be very useful. It argues a deficiency in taste to turn over an elaborate

preface unread; for it is the attar of the author's roses; every drop distilled at an immense cost. It is the reason of the reasoning, and the folly of the foolish.

I do not wish, however, to conceal that several writers, as well as readers, have spoken very disrespectfully of this species of literature. That fine writer Montesquieu, in closing the preface to his "Persian Letters," says, "I do not praise my 'Persians;' because it would be a very tedious thing, put in a place already very tedious of itself; I mean a preface." Spence, in the preface to his "Polymetis," inform us, that "there is not any sort of writing which he sits down to with so much unwillingness as that of prefaces; and as he believes most people are not much fonder of reading them than he is of writing them, he shall get over this as fast as he can." Pelisson warmly protested against prefatory composition; but when he published the works of Sarrasin, was wise enough to compose a very pleasing one. He, indeed, endeavoured to justify himself for acting against his own opinions, by this ingenious excuse, that, like funeral honours, it is proper to show the utmost regard for them when given to others, but to be inattentive to them for ourselves.

Notwithstanding all this evidence, I have some good reasons for admiring prefaces; and barren as the investigation may appear, some literary amusement can be gathered.

In the first place, I observe that a prefacer is generally a most accomplished liar. Is an author to be introduced to the public? the preface is as genuine a panegyric, and nearly as long a one, as that of Pliny's on the Emperor Trajan. Such a preface is ringing an alarum bell for an author. If we look closer into the characters of these masters of ceremony, who thus sport with and defy the judgment of their reader, and who, by their extravagant panegyric, do considerable injury to the cause of taste, we discover that some accidental occurrence has

occasioned this vehement affection for the author, and which, like that of another kind of love, makes one commit so many extravagances.

Prefaces are indeed rarely sincere. It is justly observed by Shenstone, in his prefatory Essay to the "Elegies," that "discourses prefixed to poetry inculcate such tenets as may exhibit the performance to the greatest advantage. The fabric is first raised, and the measures by which we are to judge of it are afterwards adjusted." This observation might be exemplified by more instances than some readers might choose to read. It will be sufficient to observe with what art both Pope and Fontenelle have drawn up their Essays on the nature of Pastoral Poetry, that the rules they wished to establish might be adapted to their own pastorals. Has accident made some ingenious student apply himself to a subordinate branch of literature, or to some science which is not highly esteemed—look in the preface for its sublime panegyric. Collectors of coins, dresses, and butterflies, have astonished the world with eulogiums which would raise their particular studies into the first ranks of philosophy.

It would appear that there is no lie to which a prefacer is not tempted. I pass over the commodious prefaces of Dryden, which were ever adapted to the poem and not to poetry, to the author and not to literature.

The boldest preface-liar was Aldus Manutius, who, having printed an edition of Aristophanes, first published in the preface that Saint Chrysostom was accustomed to place this comic poet under his pillow, that he might always have his works at hand. As, in that age, a saint was supposed to possess every human talent, good taste not excepted, Aristophanes thus recommended became a general favourite. The anecdote lasted for nearly two centuries; and what was of greater consequence to Aldus, quickened the sale of his Aristophanes. This inge-

nious invention of the prefacer of Aristophanes at length was detected by Menage.

The insincerity of prefaces arises whenever an author would disguise his solicitude for his work, by appearing negligent, and even undesirous of its success. A writer will rarely conclude such a preface without betraying himself. I think that even Dr. Johnson forgot his sound dialectic in the admirable Preface to his Dictionary. In one part he says, "having laboured this work with so much application, I cannot but have some degree of parental fondness." But in his conclusion he tells us, "I dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise." I deny the doctor's "frigidity." This polished period exhibits an affected stoicism, which no writer ever felt for the anxious labour of a great portion of life, addressed not merely to a class of readers, but to literary Europe.

But if prefaces are rarely sincere or just, they are, notwithstanding, literary opuscula in which the author is materially concerned. A work with a poor preface, like a person who comes with an indifferent recommendation, must display uncommon merit to master our prejudices, and to please us, as it were, in spite of ourselves. Works ornamented by a finished preface, such as Johnson not infrequently presented to his friends or his booksellers, inspire us with awe; we observe a veteran guard placed in the porch, and we are induced to conclude from this appearance that some person of eminence resides in the place itself.

The public are treated with contempt when an author professes to publish his puerilities. This Warburton did, in his pompous edition of Shakspeare. In the preface he informed the public, that his notes "were among his *younger amusements*, when he turned over these *sort of writers*." This ungracious compliment to Shakspeare and the public, merited that perfect scourging which our

haughty commentator received from the sarcastic "Canons of Criticism."* Scudery was a writer of some genius, and great variety. His prefaces are remarkable for their gasconades. In his epic poem of Alaric, he says, "I have such a facility in writing verses, and also in my invention, that a poem of double its length would have cost me little trouble. Although it contains only eleven thousand lines, I believe that longer epics do not exhibit more embellishments than mine." And to conclude with one more student of this class, Amelot de la Houssaie, in the preface to his translation of "The Prince" of Machiavel, instructs us, that "he considers his copy as superior to the original, because it is everywhere intelligible, and Machiavel is frequently obscure." I have seen in the playbills of strollers, a very pompous description of the triumphant entry of Alexander into Babylon; had they said nothing about the triumph, it might have passed without exciting ridicule; and one might not so maliciously have perceived how ill the four candle-snuffers crawled as elephants, and the triumphal car discovered its want of a lid. But having pre-excited attention, we had full leisure to sharpen our eye. To these imprudent authors and actors we may apply a Spanish proverb, which has the peculiar quaintness of that people, *Aviendo pregonado vino, venden vinagre:* "Having cried up their wine, they sell us vinegar."

A ridiculous humility in a preface is not less despicable. Many idle apologies were formerly in vogue for publication, and formed a literary cant, of which now the meanest writers perceive the futility. A literary anecdote of the Romans has been preserved, which is sufficiently curious. One Albinus, in the preface to his Roman History, intercedes for pardon for his numerous blunders of phraseology; observing that they were the

* See the essay on Warburton and his disputes in "Quarrels of Authors."—Ed.

more excusable, as he had composed his history in the Greek language, with which he was not so familiar as his maternal tongue. Cato severely rallies him on this; and justly observes, that our Albinus had merited the pardon he solicits, if a decree of the senate had compelled him thus to have composed it, and he could not have obtained a dispensation. The avowal of our ignorance of the language we employ is like that excuse which some writers make for composing on topics in which they are little conversant. A reader's heart is not so easily mollified; and it is a melancholy truth for literary men that the pleasure of abusing an author is generally superior to that of admiring him. One appears to display more critical acumen than the other, by showing that though we do not choose to take the trouble of writing, we have infinitely more genius than the author. These suppliant prefacers are described by Boileau.

> Un auteur à genoux dans une humble préface
> Au lecteur qu'il ennuie a beau demander grace;
> Il ne gagnera rien sur ce juge irrité,
> Qui lui fait son procès de pleine autorité.
>
> Low in a humble preface authors kneel;
> In vain, the wearied reader's heart is steel.
> Callous, that irritated judge with awe,
> Inflicts the penalties and arms the law.

The most entertaining prefaces in our language are those of Dryden; and though it is ill-naturedly said, by Swift, that they were merely formed

> To raise the volume's price a shilling,

yet these were the earliest commencements of English criticism, and the first attempt to restrain the capriciousness of readers, and to form a national taste. Dryden has had the candour to acquaint us with his secret of prefatory composition; for in that one to his Tales he says, "the nature of preface-writing is rambling; never

wholly out of the way, nor in it. This I have learnt from the practice of honest Montaigne." There is no great risk in establishing this observation as an axiom in literature; for should a prefacer loiter, it is never difficult to get rid of lame persons, by escaping from them; and the reader may make a preface as concise as he chooses.

It is possible for an author to paint himself in amiable colours, in this useful page, without incurring the contempt of egotism. After a writer has rendered himself conspicuous by his industry or his genius, his admirers are not displeased to hear something relative to him from himself. Hayley, in the preface to his poems, has conveyed an amiable feature in his personal character, by giving the cause of his devotion to literature as the only mode by which he could render himself of some utility to his country. There is a modesty in the prefaces of Pope, even when this great poet collected his immortal works; and in several other writers of the most elevated genius, in a Hume and a Robertson, which becomes their happy successors to imitate, and inferior writers to contemplate with awe.

There is in prefaces a due respect to be shown to the public and to ourselves. He that has no sense of self-dignity, will not inspire any reverence in others; and the ebriety of vanity will be sobered by the alacrity we all feel in disturbing the dreams of self-love. If we dare not attempt the rambling prefaces of a Dryden, we may still entertain the reader, and soothe him into good-humour for our own interest. This, perhaps, will be best obtained by making the preface (like the symphony to an opera) to contain something analogous to the work itself, to attune the mind into a harmony of tone.*

* See "Curiosities of Literature," vol. i., for an article on Prefaces

STYLE.

EVERY period of literature has its peculiar style, derived from some author of reputation; and the history of a language, as an object of taste, might be traced through a collection of ample quotations from the most celebrated authors of each period.

To Johnson may be attributed the establishment of our present refinement, and it is with truth he observes of his "Rambler," "That he had laboured to refine our language to grammatical purity, and to clear it from colloquial barbarisms, licentious idioms, and irregular combinations, and that he has added to the elegance of its construction and to the harmony of its cadence." In this description of his own refinement in style and grammatical accuracy, Johnson probably alluded to the happy carelessness of Addison, whose charm of natural ease long afterwards he discovered. But great inelegance of diction disgraced our language even so late as in 1736, when the "Inquiry into the Life of Homer" was published. That author was certainly desirous of all the graces of composition, and his volume by its singular sculptures evinces his inordinate affection for his work. This fanciful writer had a taste for polished writing, yet he abounds in expressions which now would be considered as impure in literary composition. Such vulgarisms are common—the Greeks *fell to their old trade* of one tribe expelling another—the scene is always at Athens, and all the *pother* is some little jilting story—the haughty Roman *snuffed* at the suppleness. If such diction had not been usual with good writers at that period, I should not have quoted Blackwall. Middleton, in his "Life of Cicero," though a man of classical taste, and an historian of a classical era, could not preserve himself from colloquial inelegances; the greatest characters are levelled by

the poverty of his style. Warburton, and his imitator Hurd, and other living critics of that school, are loaded with familiar idioms, which at present would debase even the style of conversation.

Such was the influence of the elaborate novelty of Johnson, that every writer in every class servilely copied the Latinised style, ludicrously mimicking the contortions and re-echoing the sonorous nothings of our great lexicographer; the novelist of domestic life, or the agriculturist in a treatise on turnips, alike aimed at the polysyllabic force, and the cadenced period. Such was the condition of English style for more than twenty years.

Some argue in favour of a natural style, and reiterate the opinion of many great critics that proper ideas will be accompanied by proper words; but though supported by the first authorities, they are not perhaps sufficiently precise in their definition. Writers may think justly, and yet write without any effect; while a splendid style may cover a vacuity of thought. Does not this evident fact prove that style and thinking have not that inseparable connexion which many great writers have pronounced? Milton imagined that beautiful thoughts produce beautiful expression. He says,

> Then feed on thoughts that voluntary move
> Harmonious numbers.

Writing is justly called an art; and Rousseau says, it is not an art easily acquired. Thinking may be the foundation of style, but it is not the superstructure; it is the marble of the edifice, but not its architecture. The art of presenting our thoughts to another, is often a process of considerable time and labour; and the delicate task of correction, in the development of ideas, is reserved only for writers of fine taste. There are several modes of presenting an idea; vulgar readers are only susceptible of the strong and palpable stroke: but there are

many shades of sentiment, which to seize on and to paint is the pride and the labour of a skilful writer. A beautiful simplicity itself is a species of refinement, and no writer more solicitously corrected his works than Hume, who excels in this mode of composition. The philosopher highly approves of Addison's definition of fine writing, who says, that it consists of sentiments which are natural, without being obvious. This is a definition of thought rather than of composition. Shenstone has hit the truth; for fine writing he defines to be generally the effect of spontaneous thoughts and a laboured style. Addison was not insensible to these charms, and he felt the seductive art of Cicero when he said, that "there is as much difference in apprehending a thought clothed in Cicero's language and that of a common author, as in seeing an object by the light of a taper, or by the light of the sun."

Mannerists in style, however great their powers, rather excite the admiration than the affection of a man of taste; because their habitual art dissipates that illusion of sincerity, which we love to believe is the impulse which places the pen in the hand of an author. Two eminent literary mannerists are Cicero and Johnson. We know these great men considered their eloquence as a deceptive art; of any subject, it had been indifferent to them which side to adopt; and in reading their elaborate works, our ear is more frequently gratified by the ambitious magnificence of their diction, than our heart penetrated by the pathetic enthusiasm of their sentiments. Writers who are not mannerists, but who seize the appropriate tone of their subject, appear to feel a conviction of what they attempt to persuade their reader. It is observable, that it is impossible to imitate with uniform felicity the noble simplicity of a pathetic writer; while the peculiarities of a mannerist are so far from being difficult, that they are displayed with nice exactness by middling writers, who,

although their own natural manner had nothing interesting, have attracted notice by such imitations. We may apply to some monotonous mannerists these verses of Boileau:

> Voulez-vous du public mériter les amours?
> Sans cesse en écrivant variez vos discours.
> On lit peu ces auteurs nés pour nous ennuier,
> Qui toujours sur un ton semblent psalmodier.
>
> Would you the public's envied favours gain?
> Ceaseless, in writing, variegate the strain;
> The heavy author, who the fancy calms,
> Seems in one tone to chant his nasal psalms.

Every style is excellent, if it be proper; and that style is most proper which can best convey the intentions of the author to his reader. And, after all, it is STYLE alone by which posterity will judge of a great work, for an author can have nothing truly his own but his style; facts, scientific discoveries, and every kind of information, may be seized by all, but an author's diction cannot be taken from him. Hence very learned writers have been neglected, while their learning has not been lost to the world, by having been given by writers with more amenity. It is therefore the duty of an author to learn to write as well as to learn to think; and this art can only be obtained by the habitual study of his sensations, and an intimate acquaintance with the intellectual faculties. These are the true prompters of those felicitous expressions which give a tone congruous to the subject, and which invest our thoughts with all the illusion, the beauty and motion of lively perception.

GOLDSMITH AND JOHNSON.

WE should not censure artists and writers for their attachment to their favourite excellence. Who but an

artist can value the ceaseless inquietudes of arduous perfection; can trace the remote possibilities combined in a close union; the happy arrangement and the novel variation? He not only is affected by the performance like the man of taste, but is influenced by a peculiar sensation; for while he contemplates the apparent beauties, he traces in his own mind those invisible processes by which the final beauty was accomplished. Hence arises that species of comparative criticism which one great author usually makes of his own manner with that of another great writer, and which so often causes him to be stigmatised with the most unreasonable vanity.

The character of Goldsmith, so underrated in his own day, exemplifies this principle in the literary character. That pleasing writer, without any perversion of intellect or inflation of vanity, might have contrasted his powers with those of Johnson, and might, according to his own ideas, have considered himself as not inferior to his more celebrated and learned rival.

Goldsmith might have preferred the felicity of his own genius, which like a native stream flowed from a natural source, to the elaborate powers of Johnson, which in some respects may be compared to those artificial waters which throw their sparkling currents in the air, to fall into marble basins. He might have considered that he had embellished philosophy with poetical elegance; and have preferred the paintings of his descriptions, to the terse versification and the pointed sentences of Johnson. He might have been more pleased with the faithful representations of English manners in his "Vicar of Wakefield," than with the borrowed grandeur and the exotic fancy of the Oriental Rasselas. He might have believed, what many excellent critics have believed, that in this age comedy requires more genius than tragedy; and with his audience he might have infinitely more esteemed his own original humour, than Johnson's rhetorical declamation.

He might have thought, that with inferior literature he displayed superior genius, and with less profundity more gaiety. He might have considered that the facility and vivacity of his pleasing compositions were preferable to that art, that habitual pomp, and that ostentatious eloquence, which prevail in the operose labours of Johnson. No one might be more sensible than himself, that he, according to the happy expression of Johnson (when his rival was in his grave), "tetigit et ornavit." Goldsmith, therefore, without any singular vanity, might have concluded, from his own reasonings, that he was not an inferior writer to Johnson: all this not having been considered, he has come down to posterity as the vainest and the most jealous of writers; he whose dispositions were the most inoffensive, whose benevolence was the most extensive, and whose amiableness of heart has been concealed by its artlessness, and passed over in the sarcasms and sneers of a more eloquent rival, and his submissive partisans.

SELF-CHARACTERS.

There are two species of minor biography which may be discriminated; detailing our own life and portraying our own character. The writing our own life has been practised with various success; it is a delicate operation, a stroke too much may destroy the effect of the whole. If once we detect an author deceiving or deceived, it is a livid spot which infects the entire body. To publish one's own life has sometimes been a poor artifice to bring obscurity into notice; it is the ebriety of vanity, and the delirium of egotism. When a great man leaves some memorial of his days, the grave consecrates the motive. There are certain things which relate to ourselves, which no one can know so well; a great genius obliges posterity

when he records them. But they must be composed with calmness, with simplicity, and with sincerity; the biographic sketch of Hume, written by himself, is a model of Attic simplicity. The Life of Lord Herbert is a biographical curiosity. The Memoirs of Sir William Jones, of Priestley, and of Gibbon, offer us the daily life of the student; and those of Colley Cibber are a fine picture of the self-painter. We have some other pieces of self-biography, precious to the philosopher.*

The other species of minor biography, that of portraying our own character, could only have been invented by the most refined and the vainest nation. The French long cherished this darling egotism; and have a collection of these self-portraits in two bulky volumes. The brilliant Fléchier, and the refined St. Evremond, have framed and glazed their portraits. Every writer then considered his character as necessary as his preface. The fashion seems to have passed over to our country; Farquhar has drawn his character in a letter to a lady; and others of our writers have given us their own miniatures.

There was, as a book in my possession will testify, a certain verse-maker of the name of Cantenac, who, in 1662, published in the city of Paris a volume, containing some thousands of verses, which were, as his countrymen express it, *de sa façon*, after his own way. He fell so suddenly into the darkest and deepest pit of oblivion, that not a trace of his memory would have remained, had he not condescended to give ample information of every particular relative to himself. He has acquainted us with his size, and tells us, "that it is rare to see a man smaller than himself. I have that in common with all dwarfs, that if my head only were seen, I should be

* One of the most interesting is that of Gifford, appended to his translation of Juvenal; it is a most remarkable record of the struggles of its author in early life, told with candour and simplicity.—Ed.

thought a large man." This atom in creation then describes his oval and full face; his fiery and eloquent eyes; his vermil lips; his robust constitution, and his effervescent passions. He appears to have been a most petulant, honest, and diminutive being.

The description of his intellect is the object of our curiosity. "I am as ambitious as any person can be; but I would not sacrifice my honour to my ambition. I am so sensible to contempt, that I bear a mortal and implacable hatred against those who contemn me, and I know I could never reconcile myself with them; but I spare no attentions for those I love; I would give them my fortune and my life. I sometimes lie; but generally in affairs of gallantry, where I voluntarily confirm falsehoods by oaths, without reflection, for swearing with me is a habit. I am told that my mind is brilliant, and that I have a certain manner in turning a thought which is quite my own. I am agreeable in conversation, though I confess I am often troublesome; for I maintain paradoxes to display my genius, which savour too much of scholastic subterfuges. I speak too often and too long; and as I have some reading, and a copious memory, I am fond of showing whatever I know. My judgment is not so solid as my wit is lively. I am often melancholy and unhappy; and this sombrous disposition proceeds from my numerous disappointments in life. My verse is preferred to my prose; and it has been of some use to me in pleasing the fair sex; poetry is most adapted to persuade women; but otherwise it has been of no service to me, and has, I fear, rendered me unfit for many advantageous occupations, in which I might have drudged. The esteem of the fair has, however, charmed away my complaints. This good fortune has been obtained by me, at the cost of many cares, and an unsubdued patience; for I am one of those who, in affairs of love, will suffer an entire year, to taste the pleasures of one day."

This character of Cantenac has some local features; for an English poet would hardly console himself with so much gaiety. The Frenchman's attachment to the ladies seems to be equivalent to the advantageous occupations he had lost. But as the miseries of a literary man, without conspicuous talents, are always the same at Paris as in London, there are some parts of this character of Cantenac which appear to describe them with truth. Cantenac was a man of honour; as warm in his resentment as his gratitude; but deluded by literary vanity, he became a writer in prose and verse, and while he saw the prospects of life closing on him, probably considered that the age was unjust. A melancholy example for certain volatile and fervent spirits, who, by becoming authors, either submit their felicity to the caprices of others, or annihilate the obscure comforts of life, and, like him, having "been told that their mind is brilliant, and that they have a certain manner in turning a thought," become writers, and complain that they are "often melancholy, owing to their numerous disappointments." Happy, however, if the obscure, yet too sensible writer, can suffer an entire year, for the enjoyment of a single day! But for this, a man must have been born in France.

ON READING.

Writing is justly denominated an art; I think that reading claims the same distinction. To adorn ideas with elegance is an act of the mind superior to that of receiving them; but to receive them with a happy discrimination is the effect of a practised taste.

Yet it will be found that taste alone is not sufficient to obtain the proper end of reading. Two persons of equal taste rise from the perusal of the same book with very

different notions: the one will have the ideas of the author at command, and find a new train of sentiment awakened; while the other quits his author in a pleasing distraction, but of the pleasures of reading nothing remains but tumultuous sensations.

To account for these different effects, we must have recourse to a logical distinction, which appears to reveal one of the great mysteries in the art of reading. Logicians distinguish between perceptions and ideas. Perception is that faculty of the mind which notices the simple impression of objects: but when these objects exist in the mind, and are there treasured and arranged as materials for reflection, then they are called ideas. A perception is like a transient sunbeam, which just shows the object, but leaves neither light nor warmth; while an idea is like the fervid beam of noon, which throws a settled and powerful light.

Many ingenious readers complain that their memory is defective, and their studies unfruitful. This defect arises from their indulging the facile pleasures of perceptions, in preference to the laborious habit of forming them into ideas. Perceptions require only the sensibility of taste, and their pleasures are continuous, easy, and exquisite. Ideas are an art of combination, and an exertion of the reasoning powers. Ideas are therefore labours; and for those who will not labour, it is unjust to complain, if they come from the harvest with scarcely a sheaf in their hands.

There are secrets in the art of reading which tend to facilitate its purposes, by assisting the memory, and augmenting intellectual opulence. Some our own ingenuity must form, and perhaps every student has peculiar habits of study, as, in short-hand, almost every writer has a system of his own.

It is an observation of the elder Pliny (who, having been a voluminous compiler, must have had great

experience in the art of reading), that there was no book so bad but which contained something good. To read every book would, however, be fatal to the interest of most readers; but it is not always necessary, in the pursuits of learning, to read every book entire. Of many books it is sufficient to seize the plan, and to examine some of their portions. Of the little supplement at the close of a volume, few readers conceive the utility; but some of the most eminent writers in Europe have been great adepts in the art of index reading. I, for my part, venerate the inventor of indexes; and I know not to whom to yield the preference, either to Hippocrates, who was the first great anatomiser of the human body, or to that unknown labourer in literature, who first laid open the nerves and arteries of a book. Watts advises the perusal of the prefaces and the index of a book, as they both give light on its contents.

The ravenous appetite of Johnson for reading is expressed in a strong metaphor by Mrs. Knowles, who said, "he knows how to read better than any one; he gets at the substance of a book directly: he tears out the heart of it." Gibbon has a new idea in the "Art of Reading;" he says "we ought not to attend to the order of our books so much as of our thoughts. The perusal of a particular work gives birth perhaps to ideas unconnected with the subject it treats; I pursue these ideas, and quit my proposed plan of reading." Thus in the midst of Homer he read Longinus; a chapter of Longinus led to an epistle of Pliny; and having finished Longinus, he followed the train of his ideas of the sublime and beautiful in the "Enquiry" of Burke, and concluded by comparing the ancient with the modern Longinus.

There are some mechanical aids in reading which may prove of great utility, and form a kind of rejuvenescence of our early studies. Montaigne placed at the end of a book which he intended not to reperuse, the time he had

read it, with a concise decision on its merits; "that," says he, "it may thus represent to me the air and general idea I had conceived of the author, in reading the work." We have several of these annotations. Of Young the poet it is noticed, that whenever he came to a striking passage he folded the leaf; and that at his death, books have been found in his library which had long resisted the power of closing: a mode more easy than useful; for after a length of time they must be again read to know why they were folded. This difficulty is obviated by those who note in a blank leaf the pages to be referred to, with a word of criticism. Nor let us consider these minute directions as unworthy the most enlarged minds: by these petty exertions, at the most distant periods, may learning obtain its authorities, and fancy combine its ideas. Seneca, in sending some volumes to his friend Lucilius, accompanies them with notes of particular passages, "that," he observes, "you who only aim at the useful may be spared the trouble of examining them entire." I have seen books noted by Voltaire with a word of censure or approbation on the page itself, which was his usual practice; and these volumes are precious to every man of taste. Formey complained that the books he lent Voltaire were returned always disfigured by his remarks; but he was a writer of the old school.*

A professional student should divide his readings into a *uniform* reading which is useful, and into a *diversified* reading which is pleasant. Guy Patin, an eminent physician and man of letters, had a just notion of this manner. He says, "I daily read Hippocrates, Galen, Fernel, and other illustrious masters of my profession; this I call my profitable readings. I frequently read Ovid, Juvenal, Horace, Seneca, Tacitus, and others, and

* The account of Oldys and his manuscripts, in the third volume of the "Curiosities of Literature," will furnish abundant proof of the value of such *disfigurations* when the work of certain hands.—Ed.

these are my recreations." We must observe these distinctions; for it frequently happens that a lawyer or a physician, with great industry and love of study, by giving too much into his diversified readings, may utterly neglect what should be his uniform studies.

A reader is too often a prisoner attached to the triumphal car of an author of great celebrity; and when he ventures not to judge for himself, conceives, while he is reading the indifferent works of great authors, that the languor which he experiences arises from his own defective taste. But the best writers, when they are voluminous, have a great deal of mediocrity.

On the other side, readers must not imagine that all the pleasures of composition depend on the author, for there is something which a reader himself must bring to the book that the book may please. There is a literary appetite, which the author can no more impart than the most skilful cook can give an appetency to the guests. When Cardinal Richelieu said to Godeau, that he did not understand his verses, the honest poet replied that it was not his fault. The temporary tone of the mind may be unfavourable to taste a work properly, and we have had many erroneous criticisms from great men, which may often be attributed to this circumstance. The mind communicates its infirm dispositions to the book, and an author has not only his own defects to account for, but also those of his reader. There is something in composition like the game of shuttlecock, where if the reader do not quickly rebound the feathered cock to the author the game is destroyed, and the whole spirit of the work falls extinct.

A frequent impediment in reading is a disinclination in the mind to settle on the subject; agitated by incongruous and dissimilar ideas, it is with pain that we admit those of the author. But on applying ourselves with a gentle violence to the perusal of an interesting

work, the mind soon assimilates to the subject; the ancient rabbins advised their young students to apply themselves to their readings, whether they felt an inclination or not, because, as they proceeded, they would find their disposition restored and their curiosity awakened.

Readers may be classed into an infinite number of divisions; but an author is a solitary being, who, for the same reason he pleases one, must consequently displease another. To have too exalted a genius is more prejudicial to his celebrity than to have a moderate one; for we shall find that the most popular works are not the most profound, but such as instruct those who require instruction, and charm those who are not too learned to taste their novelty. Lucilius, the satirist, said, that he did not write for Persius, for Scipio, and for Rutilius, persons eminent for their science, but for the Tarentines, the Consentines, and the Sicilians. Montaigne has complained that he found his readers too learned, or too ignorant, and that he could only please a middle class, who have just learning enough to comprehend him. Congreve says, "there is in true beauty something which vulgar souls cannot admire." Balzac complains bitterly of readers,—"A period," he cries, "shall have cost us the labour of a day; we shall have distilled into an essay the essence of our mind; it may be a finished piece of art; and they think they are indulgent when they pronounce it to contain some pretty things, and that the style is not bad!" There is something in exquisite composition which ordinary readers can never understand.

Authors are vain, but readers are capricious. Some will only read old books, as if there were no valuable truths to be discovered in modern publications; while others will only read new books, as if some valuable truths are not among the old. Some will not read a book, because they are acquainted with the author; by

which the reader may be more injured than the author: others not only read the book, but would also read the man; by which the most ingenious author may be injured by the most impertinent reader.

ON HABITUATING OURSELVES TO AN INDIVIDUAL PURSUIT.

Two things in human life are at continual variance, and without escaping from the one we must be separated from the other; and these are *ennui* and *pleasure*. Ennui is an afflicting sensation, if we may thus express it, from a want of sensation; and pleasure is greater pleasure according to the quantity of sensation. That sensation is received in proportion to the capacity of our organs; and that practice, or, as it has been sometimes called, "educated feeling," enlarges this capacity, is evident in such familiar instances as those of the blind, who have a finer tact, and the jeweller, who has a finer sight, than other men who are not so deeply interested in refining their vision and their touch. Intense attention is, therefore, a certain means of deriving more numerous pleasures from its object.

Hence it is that the poet, long employed on a poem, has received a quantity of pleasure which no reader can ever feel. In the progress of any particular pursuit, there are a hundred fugitive sensations which are too intellectual to be embodied into language. Every artist knows that between the thought that first gave rise to his design, and each one which appears in it, there are innumerable intermediate evanescences of sensation which no man felt but himself. These pleasures are in number according to the intenseness of his faculties and the quantity of his labour.

It is so in any particular pursuit, from the manufactur-

ing of pins to the construction of philosophical systems. Every individual can exert that quantity of mind necessary to his wants and adapted to his situation; the quality of pleasure is nothing in the present question: for I think that we are mistaken concerning the gradations of human felicity. It does at first appear, that an astronomer rapt in abstraction, while he gazes on a star, must feel a more exquisite delight than a farmer who is conducting his team; or a poet experience a higher gratification in modulating verses than a trader in arranging sums. But the happiness of the ploughman and the trader may be as satisfactory as that of the astronomer and the poet. Our mind can only be conversant with those sensations which surround us, and possessing the skill of managing them, we can form an artificial felicity; it is certain that what the soul does not feel, no more affects it than what the eye does not see. It is thus that the trader, habituated to humble pursuits, can never be unhappy because he is not the general of an army; for this idea of felicity he has never received. The philosopher who gives his entire years to the elevated pursuits of mind, is never unhappy because he is not in possession of an Indian opulence, for the idea of accumulating this exotic splendour has never entered the range of his combinations. Nature, an impartial mother, renders felicity as perfect in the school-boy who scourges his top, as in the astronomer who regulates his star. The thing contained can only be equal to the container; a full glass is as full as a full bottle; and a human soul may be as much satisfied in the lowest of human beings as in the highest.

In the progress of an individual pursuit, what philosophers call the associating or suggesting idea is ever busied, and in its beautiful effects genius is most deeply concerned; for besides those trains of thought the great artist falls into during his actual composition, a distinct

habit accompanies real genius through life in the activity of his associating idea, when not at his work; it is at all times pressing and conducting his spontaneous thoughts, and every object which suggests them, however apparently trivial or unconnected towards itself, making what it wills its own, while instinctively it seems inattentive to whatever has no tendency to its own purposes.

Many peculiar advantages attend the cultivation of one master passion or occupation. In superior minds it is a sovereign that exiles others, and in inferior minds it enfeebles pernicious propensities. It may render us useful to our fellow-citizens, and it imparts the most perfect independence to ourselves. It is observed by a great mathematician, that a geometrician would not be unhappy in a desert.

This unity of design, with a centripetal force, draws all the rays of our existence; and often, when accident has turned the mind firmly to one object, it has been discovered that its occupation is another name for happiness; for it is a mean of escaping from incongruous sensations. It secures us from the dark vacuity of soul, as well as from the whirlwind of ideas; reason itself is a passion, but a passion full of serenity.

It is, however, observable of those who have devoted themselves to an individual object, that its importance is incredibly enlarged to their sensations. Intense attention magnifies like a microscope; but it is possible to apologise for their apparent extravagance from the consideration, that they really observe combinations not perceived by others of inferior application. That this passion has been carried to a curious violence of affection, literary history affords numerous instances. In reading Dr. Burney's "Musical Travels," it would seem that music was the prime object of human life; Richardson, the painter, in his treatise on his beloved art, closes

all by affirming, that, "*Raphael* is not only *equal*, but *superior* to a *Virgil*, or a *Livy*, or a *Thucydides*, or a *Homer!*" and that painting can reform our manners, increase our opulence, honour, and power. Denina, in his "Revolutions of Literature," tells us that to excel in historical composition requires more ability than is exercised by the excelling masters of any other art; because it requires not only the same erudition, genius, imagination, and taste, necessary for a poet, a painter, or a philosopher, but the historian must also have some peculiar qualifications; this served as a prelude to his own history.* Helvetius, an enthusiast in the fine arts and polite literature, has composed a poem on Happiness; and imagines that it consists in an exclusive love of the cultivation of letters and the arts. All this shows that the more intensely we attach ourselves to an individual object, the more numerous and the more perfect are our sensations; if we yield to the distracting variety of opposite pursuits with an equal passion, our soul is placed amid a continual shock of ideas, and happiness is lost by mistakes.

ON NOVELTY IN LITERATURE.

"All is said," exclaims the lively La Bruyère; but at the same moment, by his own admirable Reflections, confutes the dreary system he would establish. An opinion of the exhausted state of literature has been a popular prejudice of remote existence; and an unhappy idea of a wise ancient, who, even in his day, lamented

* One of the most amusing modern instances occurs in the Preface to the late Peter Buchan's annotated edition of "Ancient Ballads and Songs of the North of Scotland" (2 vols. 8vo, Edin. 1828), in which he declares—"No one has yet conceived, nor has it entered the mind of man, what patience, perseverance, and general knowledge are necessary for an editor of a Collection of Ancient Ballads."—Ed.

that "of books there is no end," has been transcribed in many books. He who has critically examined any branch of literature, has discovered how little of original invention is to be found even in the most excellent works. To add a little to his predecessors satisfies the ambition of the first geniuses. The popular notion of literary novelty is an idea more fanciful than exact. Many are yet to learn that our admired originals are not such as they mistake them to be; that the plans of the most original performances have been borrowed; and that the thoughts of the most admired compositions are not wonderful discoveries, but only truths, which the ingenuity of the author, by arranging the intermediate and accessary ideas, has unfolded from that confused sentiment, which those experience who are not accustomed to think with depth, or to discriminate with accuracy. This Novelty in Literature is, as Pope defines it,

> What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd.

Novelty, in its rigid acceptation, will not be found in any judicious production.

Voltaire looked on everything as imitation. He observes that the most original writers borrowed one from another, and says that the instruction we gather from books is like fire—we fetch it from our neighbours, kindle it at home, and communicate it to others, till it becomes the property of all. He traces some of the finest compositions to the fountain-head; and the reader smiles when he perceives that they have travelled in regular succession through China, India, Arabia, and Greece, to France and to England.

To the obscurity of time are the ancients indebted for that originality in which they are imagined to excel, but we know how frequently they accuse each other; and to have borrowed copiously from preceding writers was not considered criminal by such illustrious authors as

Plato and Cicero. The Æneid of Virgil displays little invention in the incidents, for it unites the plan of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Our own early writers have not more originality than modern genius may aspire to reach. To imitate and to rival the Italians and the French formed their devotion. Chaucer, Gower, and Gawin Douglas, were all spirited imitators, and frequently only masterly translators. Spenser, the father of so many poets, is himself the child of the Ausonian Muse. Milton is incessantly borrowing from the poetry of his day. In the beautiful Masque of Comus he preserved all the circumstances of the work he imitated. Tasso opened for him the Tartarean Gulf; the sublime description of the bridge may be found in Sadi, who borrowed it from the Turkish theology; the paradise of fools is a wild flower, transplanted from the wilderness of Ariosto. The rich poetry of Gray is a wonderful tissue, woven on the frames, and composed with the gold threads, of others. To Cervantes we owe Butler; and the united abilities of three great wits, in their *Martinus Scriblerus*, could find no other mode of conveying their powers but by imitating at once Don Quixote and Monsieur Oufle. Pope, like Boileau, had all the ancients and moderns in his pay; the contributions he levied were not the pillages of a bandit, but the taxes of a monarch. Swift is much indebted for the plans of his two very original performances: he owes the "Travels of Gulliver" to the "Voyages of Cyrano de Bergerac to the Sun and Moon;" a writer, who, without the acuteness of Swift, has wilder flashes of fancy; Joseph Warton has observed many of Swift's strokes in Bishop Godwin's "Man in the Moon," who, in his turn, must have borrowed his work from Cyrano. "The Tale of a Tub" is an imitation of such various originals, that they are too numerous here to mention. Wotton observed, justly, that in many places the author's wit is not his own.

Dr. Ferriar's "Essay on the Imitations of Sterne" might be considerably augmented. Such are the writers, however, who imitate, but remain inimitable!

Montaigne, with honest naïveté, compares his writings to a thread that binds the flowers of others; and that, by incessantly pouring the waters of a few good old authors into his sieve, some drops fall upon his paper. The good old man elsewhere acquaints us with a certain stratagem of his own invention, consisting of his inserting whole sentences from the ancients, without acknowledgment, that the critics might blunder, by giving *nazardes* to Seneca and Plutarch, while they imagined they tweaked his nose. Petrarch, who is not the inventor of that tender poetry of which he is the model, and Boccaccio, called the father of Italian novelists, have alike profited by a studious perusal of writers, who are now only read by those who have more curiosity than taste. Boiardo has imitated Pulci, and Ariosto, Boiardo. The madness of Orlando Furioso, though it wears, by its extravagance, a very original air, is only imitated from Sir Launcelot in the old romance of "Morte Arthur," with which, Warton observes, it agrees in every leading circumstance; and what is the Cardenio of Cervantes but the Orlando of Ariosto? Tasso has imitated the *Iliad*, and enriched his poem with episodes from the *Æneid*. It is curious to observe that even Dante, wild and original as he appears, when he meets Virgil in the Inferno, warmly expresses his gratitude for the many fine passages for which he was indebted to his works, and on which he says he had "long meditated." Molière and La Fontaine are considered to possess as much originality as any of the French writers; yet the learned Ménage calls Molière "un grand et habile picoreur;" and Boileau tells us that La Fontaine borrowed his style and matter from Marot and Rabelais, and took his subjects from Boccaccio, Poggius, and Ariosto. Nor was the eccentric Rabelais the inventor of most of

his burlesque narratives; and he is a very close imitator of Folengo, the inventor of the macaronic poetry, and not a little indebted to the old *Facezie* of the Italians. Indeed Marot, Villon, as well as those we have noticed, profited by the authors anterior to the age of Francis I. La Bruyère incorporates whole passages of Publius Syrus in his work, as the translator of the latter abundantly shows. To the "Turkish Spy" was Montesquieu beholden for his "Persian Letters," and a numerous crowd are indebted to Montesquieu. Corneille made a liberal use of Spanish literature; and the pure waters of Racine flowed from the fountains of Sophocles and Euripides.

This vein of imitation runs through the productions of our greatest authors. Vigneul de Marville compares some of the first writers to bankers who are rich with the assembled fortunes of individuals, and would be often ruined were they too hardly drawn on.

VERS DE SOCIÉTÉ.

Pliny, in an epistle to Tuscus, advises him to intermix among his severer studies the softening charms of poetry; and notices a species of poetical composition which merits critical animadversion. I shall quote Pliny in the language of his elegant translator. He says, "These pieces commonly go under the title of poetical amusements; but these amusements have sometimes gained as much reputation to their authors as works of a more serious nature. It is surprising how much the mind is entertained and enlivened by these little poetical compositions, as they turn upon subjects of gallantry, satire, tenderness, politeness, and everything, in short, that concerns life, and the affairs of the world."

This species of poetry has been carried to its utmost

perfection by the French. It has been discriminated by them, from the mass of poetry, under the apt title of "*Poësies légères*," and sometimes it has been significantly called "*Vers de Société.*" The French writers have formed a body of this fugitive poetry which no European nation can rival; and to which both the language and genius appear to be greatly favourable.

The "*Poësies légères*" are not merely compositions of a light and gay turn, but are equally employed as a vehicle for tender and pathetic sentiment. They are never long, for they are consecrated to the amusement of society. The author appears to have composed them for his pleasure, not for his glory; and he charms his readers, because he seems careless of their approbation.

Every delicacy of sentiment must find its delicacy of expression, and every tenderness of thought must be softened by the tenderest tones. Nothing trite or trivial must enfeeble and chill the imagination; nor must the ear be denied its gratification by a rough or careless verse. In these works nothing is pardoned; a word may disturb, a line may destroy the charm.

The passions of the poet may form the subjects of his verse. It is in these writings he delineates himself; he reflects his tastes, his desires, his humours, his amours, and even his defects. In other poems the poet disappears under the feigned character he assumes; here alone he speaks, here he acts. He makes a confidant of the reader, interests him in his hopes and his sorrows; we admire the poet, and conclude with esteeming the man. The poem is the complaint of a lover, or a compliment to a patron, a vow of friendship, or a hymn of gratitude.

These poems have often, with great success, displayed pictures of manners; for here the poet colours the objects with all the hues of social life. Reflection must not be amplified, for these are pieces devoted to the fancy; a scene may be painted throughout the poem; a

sentiment must be conveyed in a verse. In the "Grongar Hill" of Dyer we discover some strokes which may serve to exemplify this criticism. The poet, contemplating the distant landscape, observes—

> A step methinks may pass the stream,
> So little distant dangers seem;
> So we mistake the future's face,
> Eyed through Hope's deluding glass.

It must not be supposed that, because these poems are concise, they are of easy production; a poet's genius may not be diminutive because his pieces are so; nor must we call them, as a fine sonnet has been called, a difficult trifle. A circle may be very small, yet it may be as mathematically beautiful and perfect as a larger one. To such compositions we may apply the observation of an ancient critic, that though a little thing gives perfection, yet perfection is not a little thing.

The poet must be alike polished by an intercourse with the world as with the studies of taste; one to whom labour is negligence, refinement a science, and art a nature.

Genius will not always be sufficient to impart that grace of amenity. Many of the French nobility, who cultivated poetry, have therefore oftener excelled in these poetical amusements than more professed poets. France once delighted in the amiable and ennobled names of Nivernois, Boufflers, and St. Aignan; they have not been considered as unworthy rivals of Chaulieu and Bernard, of Voltaire and Gresset.

All the minor odes of Horace, and the entire Anacreon, are compositions of this kind; effusions of the heart, and pictures of the imagination, which were produced in the convivial, the amatory, and the pensive hour. Our nation has not always been successful in these performances; they have not been kindred to its genius. With Charles II. something of a gayer and

more airy taste was communicated to our poetry, but it was desultory and incorrect. Waller, both by his habits and his genius, was well adapted to excel in this lighter poetry; and he has often attained the perfection which the state of the language then permitted. Prior has a variety of sallies; but his humour is sometimes gross, and his versification is sometimes embarrassed. He knew the value of these charming pieces, and he had drunk of this Burgundy in the vineyard itself. He has some translations, and some plagiarisms; but some of his verses to Chloe are eminently airy and pleasing. A diligent selection from our fugitive poetry might perhaps present us with many of these minor poems; but the "*Vers de Société*" form a species of poetical composition which may still be employed with great success.

THE GENIUS OF MOLIÈRE.

The genius of comedy not only changes with the age, but appears different among different people. Manners and customs not only vary among European nations, but are alike mutable from one age to another, even in the same people. These vicissitudes are often fatal to comic writers; our old school of comedy has been swept off the stage: and our present uniformity of manners has deprived our modern writers of those rich sources of invention when persons living more isolated, society was less monotonous; and Jonson and Shadwell gave us what they called "*the humours*,"—that is, the individual or particular characteristics of men.*

* Aubrey has noted this habit of our two greatest dramatists, when speaking of Shakspeare he says—"The humour of the constable in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he happend to take at Grendon in Bucks; which is the roade from London to Stratford; and there was living that constable in 1642, when I first came to Oxon. Ben Jonson and

But however taste and modes of thinking may be inconstant, and customs and manners alter, at bottom the groundwork is Nature's, in every production of comic genius. A creative genius, guided by an unerring instinct, though he draws after the contemporary models of society, will retain his pre-eminence beyond his own age and his own nation; what was temporary and local disappears, but what appertains to universal nature endures. The scholar dwells on the grotesque pleasantries of the sarcastic Aristophanes, though the Athenian manners, and his exotic personages, have long vanished.

Molière was a creator in the *art of comedy;* and although his personages were the contemporaries of Louis the Fourteenth, and his manners, in the critical acceptation of the term, local and temporary, yet his admirable genius opened that secret path of Nature, which is so rarely found among the great names of the most literary nations. Cervantes remains single in Spain; in England Shakspeare is a consecrated name; and centuries may pass away before the French people shall witness another Molière.

The history of this comic poet is the tale of powerful genius creating itself amidst the most adverse elements. We have the progress of that self-education which struck out an untried path of its own, from the time Molière had not yet acquired his art to the glorious days when

he did gather humours of men dayly, wherever they came." Shadwell, whose best plays were produced in the reign of Charles II., was a professed imitator of the style of Jonson; and so closely described the manners of his day that he was frequently accused of direct personalities, and obliged to alter one of his plays, *The Humorists*, to avoid an outcry raised against him. Sir Walter Scott has recorded, in the Preface to his "Fortunes of Nigel," the obligation he was under to Shadwell's comedy, *The Squire of Alsatia*, for the vivid description it enabled him to give of the lawless denizens of the old Sanctuary of Whitefriars.—ED.

he gave his country a Plautus in his farce, a Terence in his composition, and a Menander in his moral truths. But the difficulties overcome, and the disappointments incurred, his modesty and his confidence, and, what was not less extraordinary, his own domestic life in perpetual conflict with his character, open a more strange career, in some respects, than has happened to most others of the high order of his genius.

It was long the fate of Molière to experience that restless importunity of genius which feeds on itself, till it discovers the pabulum it seeks. Molière not only suffered that tormenting impulse, but it was accompanied by the unhappiness of a mistaken direction. And this has been the lot of some who for many years have thus been lost to themselves and to the public.

A man born among the obscure class of the people, thrown among the itinerant companies of actors—for France had not yet a theatre—occupied to his last hours by too devoted a management of his own dramatic corps; himself, too, an original actor in the characters by himself created; with no better models of composition than the Italian farces *all' improvista*, and whose fantastic gaiety he, to the last, loved too well; becomes the personal favourite of the most magnificent monarch, and the intimate of the most refined circles. Thoughtful observer of these new scenes and new personages, he sports with the affected *précieuses* and the flattering *marquises* as with the *naïve* ridiculousness of the *bourgeois*, and the wild pride and egotism of the *parvenus;* and with more profound designs and a hardier hand unmasks the impostures of false *pretenders* in all professions. His scenes, such was their verity, seem but the reflections of his reminiscences. His fertile facility when touching on transient follies; his wide comprehension, and his moralising vein, in his more elevated comedy, display, in this painter of man, the poet and the philosopher, and, above all, the great moral

satirist. Molière has shown that the most successful reformer of the manners of a people is a great comic poet.

The youth *Pocquelin*—this was his family name—was designed by the *tapissier*, his father, to be the heir of the hereditary honours of an ancient standing, which had maintained the Pocquelins through four or five generations by the articles of a furnishing upholsterer. His grandfather was a haunter of the small theatres of that day, and the boy often accompanied this venerable critic of the family to his favourite recreations. The actors were usually more excellent than their pieces; some had carried the mimetic art to the perfection of eloquent gesticulation. In these loose scenes of inartificial and burlesque pieces was the genius of Molière cradled and nursed. The changeful scenes of the *Théâtre de Bourgogne* deeply busied the boy's imagination, to the great detriment of the *tapisserie* of all the Pocquelins.

The father groaned, the grandfather clapped, the boy remonstrated till, at fourteen years of age, he was consigned, as "un mauvais sujet" (so his father qualified him), to a college of the Jesuits at Paris, where the author of the "Tartuffe" passed five years, studying—for the bar!

Philosophy and logic were waters which he deeply drank; and sprinklings of his college studies often pointed the satire of his more finished comedies. To ridicule false learning and false taste one must be intimate with the true.

On his return to the metropolis the old humour broke out at the representation of the inimitable Scaramouch of the Italian theatre. The irresistible passion drove him from his law studies, and cast young Pocquelin among a company of amateur actors, whose fame soon enabled them not to play gratuitously. Pocquelin was the manager and the modeller, for under his studious eye

this company were induced to imitate Nature with the simplicity the poet himself wrote.

The prejudices of the day, both civil and religious, had made these private theatres—no great national theatre yet existing—the resource only of the idler, the dissipated, and even of the unfortunate in society. The youthful adventurer affectionately offered a free admission to the dear Pocquelins. They rejected their *entrées* with horror, and sent their genealogical tree, drawn afresh, to shame the truant who had wantoned into the luxuriance of genius. To save the honour of the parental upholsterers Pocquelin concealed himself under the immortal name of Molière.

The future creator of French comedy had now passed his thirtieth year, and as yet his reputation was confined to his own dramatic corps—a pilgrim in the caravan of ambulatory comedy. He had provided several temporary novelties. Boileau regretted the loss of one, *Le Docteur Amoureux;* and in others we detect the abortive conceptions of some of his future pieces. The severe judgment of Molière suffered his skeletons to perish; but, when he had discovered the art of comic writing, with equal discernment he resuscitated them.

Not only had Molière not yet discovered the true bent of his genius, but, still more unfortunate, he had as greatly mistaken it as when he proposed turning *avocat*, for he imagined that his most suitable character was tragic. He wrote a tragedy, and he acted in a tragedy; the tragedy he composed was condemned at Bordeaux; the mortified poet flew to Grenoble; still the unlucky tragedy haunted his fancy; he looked on it with paternal eyes, in which there were tears. Long after, when Racine, a youth, offered him a very unactable tragedy,*

* The tragedy written by Racine was called *Théagenè et Chariclée*, and founded on the tale by Heliodorus. It was the first attempt of its author, and submitted by him to Molière, while director of the

Molière presented him with his own:—"Take this, for I am convinced that the subject is highly tragic, notwithstanding my failure." The great dramatic poet of France opened his career by recomposing the condemned tragedy of the comic wit in *La Thébaïde*. In the illusion that he was a great tragic actor, deceived by his own susceptibility, though his voice denied the tones of passion, he acted in one of Corneille's tragedies, and quite allayed the alarm of a rival company on the announcement. It was not, however, so when the author-actor vivified one of his own native personages; then, inimitably comic, every new representation seemed to be a new creation.

It is a remarkable feature, though not perhaps a singular one, in the character of this great comic writer, that he was one of the most serious of men, and even of a melancholic temperament. One of his lampooners wrote a satirical comedy on the comic poet, where he figures as "Molière hypochondre." Boileau, who knew him intimately, happily characterised Molière as *le Contemplateur*. This deep pensiveness is revealed in his physiognomy.

The genius of Molière, long undiscovered by himself, in its first attempts in a higher walk did not move alone; it was crutched by imitation, and it often deigned to plough with another's heifer. He copied whole scenes from Italian comedies and plots from Italian novelists: his sole merit was their improvement. The great comic satirist, who hereafter was to people the stage with a dramatic crowd who were to live on to posterity, had not yet struck at that secret vein of originality—the fairy treasure which one day was to cast out such a

Theatre of the Palais Royal; the latter had no favourable impression of its success if produced, but suggested *La Thébaïde* as a subject for his genius, and advanced the young poet 100 louis while engaged on his work, which was successfully produced in 1664.—Ed.

prodigality of invention. His two first comedies, *L'Etourdi* and *Le Dépit Amoureux*, which he had only ventured to bring out in a provincial theatre, were grafted on Italian and Spanish comedy. Nothing more original offered to his imagination than the Roman, the Italian, and the Spanish drama; the cunning adroit slave of Terence; the tricking, bustling *Gracioso* of modern Spain; old fathers, the dupes of some scapegrace, or of their own senile follies, with lovers sighing at cross-purposes. The germ of his future powers may, indeed, be discovered in these two comedies, for insensibly to himself he had fallen into some scenes of natural simplicity. In *L'Etourdi*, Mascarille, "le roi des serviteurs," which Molière himself admirably personated, is one of those defunct characters of the Italian comedy no longer existing in society; yet, like our Touchstone, but infinitely richer, this new ideal personage still delights by the fertility of his expedients and his perpetual and vigorous gaiety. In *Le Dépit Amoureux* is the exquisite scene of the quarrel and reconciliation of the lovers. In this fine scene, though perhaps but an amplification of the well-known ode of Horace, *Donec gratus eram tibi*, Molière consulted his own feelings, and betrayed his future genius.

It was after an interval of three or four years that the provincial celebrity of these comedies obtained a representation at Paris; their success was decisive. This was an evidence of public favour which did not accompany Molière's more finished productions, which were so far unfortunate that they were more intelligible to the few; in fact, the first comedies of Molière were not written above the popular taste; the spirit of true comedy, in a profound knowledge of the heart of man, and in the delicate discriminations of individual character, was yet unknown. Molière was satisfied to excel his predecessors, but he had not yet learned his art.

The rising poet was now earnestly sought after; a more extended circle of society now engaged his contemplative habits. He looked around on living scenes no longer through the dim spectacles of the old comedy, and he projected a new species, which was no longer to depend on its conventional grotesque personages and its forced incidents; he aspired to please a more critical audience by making his dialogue the conversation of society, and his characters its portraits.

Introduced to the literary coterie of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, a new view opened on the favoured poet. To occupy a seat in this envied circle was a distinction in society. The professed object of this reunion of nobility and literary persons, at the hôtel of the Marchioness of Rambouillet, was to give a higher tone to all France, by the cultivation of the language, the intellectual refinement of their compositions, and last, but not least, to inculcate the extremest delicacy of manners. The recent civil dissensions had often violated the urbanity of the court, and a grossness prevailed in conversation which offended the scrupulous. This critical circle was composed of both sexes. They were to be the arbiters of taste, the legislators of criticism, and, what was less tolerable, the models of genius. No work was to be stamped into currency which bore not the mint-mark of the hôtel.

In the annals of fashion and literature no coterie has presented a more instructive and amusing exhibition of the abuses of learning, and the aberrations of ill-regulated imaginations, than the Hôtel de Rambouillet, by its ingenious absurdities. Their excellent design to refine the language, the manners, and even morality itself, branched out into every species of false refinement; their science ran into trivial pedantries, their style into a fantastic jargon, and their spiritualising delicacy into the very puritanism of prudery. Their frivolous distinction between the mind and the heart, which could not always

be made to go together, often perplexed them as much as their own jargon, which was not always intelligible, even to the initiated. The French Academy is said to have originated in the first meetings of the Hôtel de Rambouillet; and it is probable that some sense and taste, in its earliest days, may have visited this society, for we do not begin such refined follies without some show of reason.

The local genius of the hôtel was feminine, though the most glorious men of the literature of France were among its votaries. The great magnet was the famed Mademoiselle Scudery, whose voluminous romances were their code; and it is supposed these tomes preserve some of their lengthened *conversaziones*. In the novel system of gallantry of this great inventor of amorous and metaphysical "twaddle," the ladies were to be approached as beings nothing short of celestial paragons; they were addressed in a language not to be found in any dictionary but their own, and their habits were more fantastic than their language: a sort of domestic chivalry formed their etiquette. Their baptismal names were to them profane, and their assumed ones were drawn from the folio romances—those Bibles of love. At length all ended in a sort of Freemasonry of gallantry, which had its graduated orders, and whoever was not admitted into the mysteries was not permitted to prolong his existence—that is, his residence among them. The apprenticeship of the craft was to be served under certain *Introducers to Ruelles*.

Their card of invitation was either a rondeau or an enigma, which served as a subject to open conversation. The lady received her visitors reposing on that throne of beauty, a bed placed in an alcove; the toilet was magnificently arranged. The space between the bed and the wall was called the *Ruelle*,* the diminutive of *la Rue;*

* In a portion of the ancient Louvre, still preserved amid the changes to which it has been subjected, is the old wainscoted bedroom of the

and in this narrow street, or "Fop's alley," walked the favoured. But the chevalier who was graced by the honorary title of *l'Alcoviste*, was at once master of the household and master of the ceremonies. His character is pointedly defined by St. Evremond, as "a lover whom the *Précieuse* is to love without enjoyment, and to enjoy in good earnest her husband with aversion." The scene offered no indecency to such delicate minds, and much less the impassioned style which passed between *les chères*, as they called themselves. Whatever offered an idea, of what their jargon denominated *charnelle*, was treason and exile. Years passed ere the hand of the elected maiden was kissed by its martyr. The celebrated Julia d'Angennes was beloved by the Duke de Montausier, but fourteen years elapsed ere she would yield a "yes." When the faithful Julia was no longer blooming, the Alcoviste duke gratefully took up the remains of her beauty.

Their more curious project was the reform of the style of conversation, to purify its grossness, and invent novel terms for familiar objects. Ménage drew up a "Petition of the Dictionaries," which, by their severity of taste, had nearly become superannuated. They succeeded better with the *marchandes des modes* and the jewellers, furnishing a vocabulary excessively *précieuse*, by which people bought their old wares with new names. At length they were so successful in their neology, that with great difficulty they understood one another. It is, however, worth observation, that the orthography invented by the *précieuses*—who, for their convenience, rejected all the redundant letters in words—was adopted, and is now used; and their pride of exclusiveness in society introduced the singular term *s'encanailler*, to describe a person who haunted low company, while their morbid

great Henry IV., with the carved recess and the *ruelle*, as described above: it is a most interesting fragment of regal domestic life.—Ed.

purity had ever on their lips the word *obscénité*, terms which Molière ridicules, but whose expressiveness has preserved them in the language.

Ridiculous as some of these extravagances now appear to us, they had been so closely interwoven with the elegance of the higher ranks, and so intimately associated with genius and literature, that the veil of fashion consecrated almost the mystical society, since we find among its admirers the most illustrious names of France.

Into this elevated and artificial circle of society our youthful and unsophisticated poet was now thrown, with a mind not vitiated by any prepossessions of false taste, studious of nature and alive to the ridiculous. But how was the comic genius to strike at the follies of his illustrious friends—to strike, but not to wound? A provincial poet and actor to enter hostilely into the sacred precincts of these Exclusives? Tormented by his genius Molière produced *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, but admirably parried, in his preface, any application to them, by averring that it was aimed at their imitators—their spurious mimics in the country. The *Précieuses Ridicules* was acted in the presence of the assembled Hôtel de Rambouillet with immense applause. A central voice from the pit, anticipating the host of enemies and the fame of the reformer of comedy, exclaimed, "Take courage, Molière, this is true comedy." The learned Ménage was the only member of the society who had the good sense to detect the drift; he perceived the snake in the grass. "We must now," said this sensible pedant (in a remote allusion to the fate of idolatry and the introduction of Christianity) to the poetical pedant, Chapelain, "follow the counsel which St. Rémi gave to Clovis—we must burn all that we adored, and adore what we have burned." The success of the comedy was universal; the company doubled their prices; the country gentry flocked to witness the marvellous novelty, which far exposed that

false taste, that romance-impertinence, and that sickly affectation which had long disturbed the quiet of families. Cervantes had not struck more adroitly at Spanish rodomontade.

At this universal reception of the *Précieuses Ridicules*, Molière, it is said, exclaimed—"I need no longer study Plautus and Terence, nor poach in the fragments of Menander; I have only to study the world." It may be doubtful whether the great comic satirist at that moment caught the sudden revelation of his genius, as he did subsequently in his *Tartuffe*, his *Misanthrope*, his *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and others. The *Précieuses Ridicules* was the germ of his more elaborate *Femmes Savantes*, which was not produced till after an interval of twelve years.

Molière returned to his old favourite *canevas*, or plots of Italian farces and novels, and Spanish comedies, which, being always at hand, furnished comedies of intrigue. *L'Ecole des Maris* is an inimitable model of this class.

But comedies which derive their chief interest from the ingenious mechanism of their plots, however poignant the delight of the artifice of the *denouement*, are somewhat like an epigram, once known, the brilliant point is blunted by repetition. This is not the fate of those representations of men's actions, passions, and manners, in the more enlarged sphere of human nature, where an eternal interest is excited, and will charm on the tenth repetition.

No! Molière had not yet discovered his true genius; he was not yet emancipated from his old seductions. A rival company was reputed to have the better actors for tragedy, and Molière resolved to compose an heroic drama on the passion of jealousy—a favorite one on which he was incessantly ruminating. *Don Garcie de Navarre, ou Le Prince Jaloux*, the hero personated by himself, terminated by the hisses of the audience.

The fall of the *Prince Jaloux* was nearly fatal to the tender reputation of the poet and the actor. The world became critical: the marquises, and the précieuses, and recently the bourgeois, who were sore from *Sganarelle, ou Le Cocu Imaginaire*, were up in arms; and the rival theatre maliciously raised the halloo, flattering themselves that the comic genius of their dreaded rival would be extinguished by the ludicrous convulsed hiccough to which Molière was liable in his tragic tones, but which he adroitly managed in his comic parts.

But the genius of Molière was not to be daunted by cabals, nor even injured by his own imprudence. *Le Prince Jaloux* was condemned in February, 1661, and the same year produced *L'Ecole des Maris* and *Les Fâcheux*. The happy genius of the poet opened on his Zoiluses a series of dramatic triumphs.

Foreign critics—Tiraboschi and Schlegel—have depreciated the Frenchman's invention, by insinuating that were all that Molière borrowed taken from him, little would remain of his own. But they were not aware of his dramatic creation, even when he appropriated the slight inventions of others; they have not distinguished the eras of the genius of Molière, and the distinct classes of his comedies. Molière had the art of amalgamating many distinct inventions of others into a single inimitable whole. Whatever might be the herbs and the reptiles thrown into the mystical caldron, the incantation of genius proved to be truly magical.

Facility and fecundity may produce inequality, but, when a man of genius works, they are imbued with a raciness which the anxious diligence of inferior minds can never yield. Shakspeare, probably, poured forth many scenes in this spirit. The multiplicity of the pieces of Molière, their different merits, and their distinct classes—all written within the space of twenty years—display, if any poet ever did, this wonder-working faculty.

The truth is, that few of his comedies are finished works; he never satisfied himself, even in his most applauded productions. Necessity bound him to furnish novelties for his theatre; he rarely printed any work. *Les Fâcheux*, an admirable series of scenes, in three acts, and in verse, was "planned, written, rehearsed, and represented in a single fortnight." Many of his dramatic effusions were precipitated on the stage; the humorous scenes of *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* were thrown out to enliven a royal fête.

This versatility and felicity of composition made everything with Molière a subject for comedy. He invented two novelties, such as the stage had never before witnessed. Instead of a grave defence from the malice of his critics, and the flying gossip of the court circle, Molière found out the art of congregating the public to *The Quarrels of Authors*. He dramatised his critics. In a comedy without a plot, and in scenes which seemed rather spoken than written, and with characters more real than personated, he displayed his genius by collecting whatever had been alleged to depreciate it; and *La Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes* is still a delightful production. This singular drama resembles the sketch-book of an artist, the *croquis* of portraits—the loose hints of thoughts, many of which we discover were more fully delineated in his subsequent pieces. With the same rapid conception he laid hold of his embarrassments to furnish dramatic novelties as expeditiously as the king required. Louis XIV. was himself no indifferent critic, and more than once suggested an incident or a character to his favourite poet. In *L'Impromptu de Versailles*, Molière appears in his own person, and in the midst of his whole company, with all the irritable impatience of a manager who had no piece ready. Amidst this green-room bustle Molière is advising, reprimanding, and imploring, his "ladies and gentlemen." The char-

acters in this piece are, in fact, the actors themselves, who appear under their own names; and Molière himself reveals many fine touches of his own poetical character, as well as his managerial. The personal pleasantries on his own performers, and the hints for plots, and the sketches of character which the poet incidentally throws out, form a perfect dramatic novelty. Some of these he himself subsequently adopted, and others have been followed up by some dramatists without rivalling Molière. The *Figaro* of Beaumarchais is a descendant of the *Mascarille* of Molière; but the glory of rivalling Molière was reserved for our own stage. Sheridan's *Critic, or a Tragedy Rehearsed*, is a congenial dramatic satire with these two pieces of Molière.

The genius of Molière had now stepped out of the restricted limits of the old comedy; he now looked on the moving world with other eyes, and he pursued the ridiculous in society. These fresher studies were going on at all hours, and every object was contemplated with a view to comedy. His most vital characters have been traced to living originals, and some of his most ludicrous scenes had occurred in reality before they delighted the audience. Monsieur Jourdain had expressed his astonishment, "qu'il faisait de la prose," in the Count de Soissons, one of the uneducated noblemen devoted to the chase. The memorable scene between Trissotin and Vadius, their mutual compliments terminating in their mutual contempt, had been rehearsed by their respective authors—the Abbé Cottin and Ménage. The stultified booby of Limoges, *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, and the mystified millionaire, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, were copied after life, as was *Sganarelle*, in *Le Médecin malgré lui.* The portraits in that gallery of dramatic paintings, *Le Misanthrope*, have names inscribed under them; and the immortal *Tartuffe* was a certain bishop of Autun. No dramatist has conceived with greater variety the female

character; the women of Molière have a distinctness of feature, and are touched with a freshness of feeling. Molière studied nature, and his comic humour is never checked by that unnatural wit where the poet, the more he discovers himself, the farther he removes himself from the personage of his creation. The quickening spell which hangs over the dramas of Molière is this close attention to nature, wherein he greatly resembles our Shakspeare, for all springs from its source. His unobtrusive genius never occurs to us in following up his characters, and a whole scene leaves on our mind a complete but imperceptible effect.

The style of Molière has often been censured by the fastidiousness of his native critics, as *bas* and *du style familier*. This does not offend the foreigner, who is often struck by its simplicity and vigour. Molière preferred the most popular and naïve expressions, as well as the most natural incidents, to a degree which startled the morbid delicacy of fashion and fashionable critics. He had frequent occasions to resist their petty remonstrances; and whenever Molière introduced an incident, or made an allusion of which he knew the truth, and which with him had a settled meaning, this master of human life trusted to his instinct and his art.

This pure and simple taste, ever rare at Paris, was the happy portion of the genius of this Frenchman. Hence he delighted to try his farcical pieces, for we cannot imagine that they were his more elevated comedies, on his old maid-servant. This maid, probably, had a keen relish for comic humour, for once when Molière read to her the comedy of another writer as his own, she soon detected the trick, declaring that it could not be her master's. Hence, too, our poet invited even children to be present on such rehearsals, and at certain points would watch their emotions. Hence, too, in his character of manager, he taught his actors to study nature. An actress, apt to

speak freely, told him, "You torment us all; but you never speak to my husband." This man, originally a candle-snuffer, was a perfect child of nature, and acted the Thomas Diaforius, in *Le Malade Imaginaire.* Molière replied, "I should be sorry to say a word to him; I should spoil his acting. Nature has provided him with better lessons to perform his parts than any which I could give him." We may imagine Shakspeare thus addressing his company, had the poet been also the manager.

A remarkable incident in the history of the genius of Molière is the frequent recurrence of the poet to the passion of jealousy. The "jaundice in the lover's eye," he has painted with every tint of his imagination. "The green-eyed monster" takes all shapes, and is placed in every position. Solemn, or gay, or satirical, he sometimes appears in agony, but often seems to make its "trifles light as air," only ridiculous as a source of consolation. Was *Le Contemplateur* comic in his melancholy, or melancholy in his comic humour?

The truth is, that the poet himself had to pass through those painful stages which he has dramatised. The domestic life of Molière was itself very dramatic; it afforded Goldoni a comedy of five acts, to reveal the secrets of the family circle of Molière; and l'Abbate Chiari, an Italian novelist and playwright, has taken for a comic subject, *Molière, the Jealous Husband.*

The French, in their "petite morale" on conjugal fidelity, appear so tolerant as to leave little sympathy for the real sufferer. Why should they else have treated domestic jealousy as a foible for ridicule, rather than a subject for deep passion? Their tragic drama exhibits no Othello, nor their comedy a Kitely, or a *Suspicious Husband.* Molière, while his own heart was the victim, conformed to the national taste, by often placing the object on its comic side. Domestic jealousy is a passion which admits of a great diversity of subjects, from the

tragic or the pathetic, to the absurd and the ludicrous. We have them all in Molière. Molière often was himself "Le Cocu Imaginaire;" he had been in the position of the guardian in *L'Ecole des Maris*. Like Arnolphe in *L'Ecole des Femmes*, he had taken on himself to rear a young wife who played the same part, though with less innocence; and like the *Misanthrope*, where the scene between Alceste and Celimène is "une des plus fortes qui existant au théâtre," he was deeply entangled in the wily cruelties of scornful coquetry, and we know that at times he suffered in the "hell of lovers" the torments of his own *Jealous Prince*.

When this poet cast his fate with a troop of comedians, as the manager, and whom he never would abandon, when at the height of his fortune, could he avoid accustoming himself to the relaxed habits of that gay and sorrowful race, who, "of imagination all compact," too often partake of the passions they inspire in the scene? The first actress, Madame Béjard, boasted that, with the exception of the poet, she had never dispensed her personal favours but to the aristocracy. The constancy of Molière was interrupted by another actress, Du Parc; beautiful but insensible, she only tormented the poet, and furnished him with some severe lessons for the coquetry of his Celimène, in *Le Misanthrope*. The facility of the transition of the tender passion had more closely united the susceptible poet to Mademoiselle de Brie. But Madame Béjard, not content to be the chief actress, and to hold her partnership in "the properties," to retain her ancient authority over the poet, introduced, suddenly, a blushing daughter, some say a younger sister, who had hitherto resided at Avignon, and who she declared was the offspring of the count of Modena, by a secret marriage. Armande Béjard soon attracted the paternal attentions of the poet. She became the secret idol of his retired moments, while he fondly thought that he could mould a young mind, in

its innocence, to his own sympathies. The mother and the daughter never agreed. Armande sought his protection; and one day rushing into his study, declared that she would marry her friend. The elder Béjard freely consented to avenge herself on De Brie. De Brie was indulgent, though "the little creature," she observed, was to be yoked to one old enough to be her father. Under the same roof were now heard the voices of the three females, and Molière meditating scenes of feminine jealousies.

Molière was fascinated by his youthful wife; her lighter follies charmed: two years riveted the connubial chains. Molière was a husband who was always a lover. The actor on the stage was the very man he personated. Mademoiselle Molière, as she was called by the public, was the Lucile in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. With what fervour the poet feels her neglect! with what eagerness he defends her from the animadversions of the friend who would have dissolved the spell!

The poet was doomed to endure more poignant sorrows than slights. Mademoiselle had the art of persuading Molière that he was only his own "cocu imaginaire;" but these domestic embarrassments multiplied. Mademoiselle, reckless of the distinguished name she bore, while she gratified her personal vanity by a lavish expenditure, practised that artful coquetry which attracted a crowd of loungers. Molière found no repose in his own house, and retreated to a country-house, where, however, his restless jealousy often drove him back to scenes which he trembled to witness. At length came the last argument of outraged matrimony—he threatened confinement. To prevent a public rupture, Molière consented to live under the same roof, and only to meet at the theatre. Weak only in love, however divided from his wife, Molière remained her perpetual lover. He said, in confidence, "I am born with every disposition to tender-

ness. When I married, she was too young to betray any evil inclinations. My studies were devoted to her, but I soon discovered her indifference. I ascribed it to her temper; her foolish passion for Count Guiche made too much noise to leave me even this apparent tranquillity I resolved to live with her as an honourable man, whose reputation does not depend on the bad conduct of his wife. My kindness has not changed her, but my compassion has increased. Those who have not experienced these delicate emotions have never truly loved. In her absence her image is before me; in her presence, I am deprived of all reflection; I have no longer eyes for her defects; I only view her amiable. Is not this the last extreme of folly? And are you not surprised that I, reasoning as I do, am only sensible of the weakness which I cannot throw off?"

Few men of genius have left in their writings deeper impressions of their personal feelings than Molière. With strong passions in a feeble frame, he had duped his imagination that, like another Pygmalion, he would create a woman by his own art. In silence and agony he tasted the bitter fruits of the disordered habits of the life of a comedian, a manager, and a poet. His income was splendid; but he himself was a stranger to dissipation. He was a domestic man, of a pensive and even melancholy temperament. Silent and reserved, unless in conversation with that more intimate circle whose literature aided his genius, or whose friendship consoled for his domestic disturbances, his habits were minutely methodical; the strictest order was observed throughout his establishment; the hours of dinner, of writing, of amusement, were allotted, and the slightest derangement in his own apartment excited a morbid irritability which would interrupt his studies for whole days.

Who, without this tale of Molière, could conjecture, that one skilled in the workings of our nature would

have ventured on the perilous experiment of equalizing sixteen years against forty—weighing roses against grey locks—to convert a wayward coquette, through her capricious womanhood, into an attached wife? Yet, although Mademoiselle could cherish no personal love for the intellectual being, and hastened to change the immortal name she bore for a more terrestrial man, she seems to have been impressed by a perfect conviction of his creative genius. When the Archbishop of Paris, in the pride of prelacy, refused the rights of sepulture to the corpse of Molière THE ACTOR, it was her voice which reminded the world of Molière THE POET, exclaiming—"Have they denied a grave to the man to whom Greece would have raised an altar!"

THE SENSIBILITY OF RACINE.

THE "Memoirs of the poet Racine," composed by his son, who was himself no contemptible poet, may be classed among those precious pieces of biography so delightful to the philosopher who studies human nature, and the literary man whose curiosity is interested in the history of his republic. Such works are rare, and rank in merit next to autobiographies. Such biographical sketches, like Boswell's of Johnson, contain what we often regret is wanting in the more regular life of a professed biographer. These desultory memoirs interest by their warmth, their more personal acquaintance with the hero, and abound with those minuter strokes which give so much life to the individual character.

The prominent feature in the character of Racine was an excessive tenderness of feeling; his profound sensibility even to its infirmity, the tears which would cover his face, and the agony in his heart, were perhaps national. But if this sensibility produced at times the

softest emotions, if it made him the poet of lovers, and even the poet of imagination, it also rendered him too feelingly alive to criticism, it embittered his days with too keen a perception of the domestic miseries which all men must alike undergo.

During a dramatic performance at St. Cyr, the youthful representative of Esther suddenly forgot her part; the agitated poet exclaimed, "Oh, mademoiselle, you are ruining my piece!" Terrified at this reprimand, the young actress wept; the poet flew to her, wiped away her tears, and with contagious sympathy shed tears himself. "I do not hesitate," says Louis Racine, "to relate such minute circumstances, because this facility of shedding tears shows the goodness of the heart, according to the observation of the ancients—

ἀγαθοὶ δ' ἀριδάκρυες ἀνδρες.

This morbid state of feeling made his whole literary life uneasy; unjust criticism affected him as much as the most poignant, and there was nothing he dreaded more than that his son should become a writer of tragedies. "I will not dissimulate," he says, addressing his son, "that in the heat of composition we are not sometimes pleased with ourselves; but you may believe me, when the day after we look over our work, we are astonished not to find that excellence we admired in the evening; and when we reflect that even what we find good ought to be still better, and how distant we are still from perfection, we are discouraged and dissatisfied. Besides all this, although the approbation I have received has been very flattering, the least adverse criticism, even miserable as it might be, has always occasioned me more vexation than all the praise I received could give me pleasure." And, again, he endeavors to impress on him that the favour he received from the world he owed not to his verses. "Do not imagine that they are my verses that

attract all these kindnesses. Corneille composes verses a hundred times finer than mine, but no one regards him. His verses are only applauded from the mouths of the actors. I do not tire men of the world by reciting my works; I never allude to them; I endeavour to amuse them with matters which please them. My talent in their company is, not to make them feel that I have any genius, but to show them that they possess some themselves. When you observe the duke pass several hours with me, you would be surprised, were you present, that he frequently quits me without my having uttered three words; but gradually I put him in a humour of chatting, and he leaves me more satisfied with himself than with me." When Rochefoucault said that Boileau and Racine had only one kind of genius, and could only talk about their own poetry, it is evident that the observation should not have extended to Racine, however it might to Boileau. It was Racine's excessive sensibility which made him the finest dramatic reciter. The celebrated actress, Mademoiselle Champmeslé,* the heroine of his tragedies, had no genius whatever for the stage, but she had beauty, voice, and memory. Racine taught her first to comprehend the verses she was going to recite, showed her the appropriate gesture, and gave her the variable tones, which he even sometimes noted down. His pupil, faithful to her lessons, though a mere actress of art, on the stage seemed inspired by passion; and as she, thus formed and fashioned, naturally only played thus effect-

* Racine first met this actress at the Marquis de Sevigné's *petit soupers;* so much lamented by his more famous mother in one of her admirable letters, who speaks of "the Racines and the Despreaux's" who assisted his prodigality. In one of Madame de Sevigné's letters, dated in 1672, she somewhat rashly declares, "Racine now writes his dramas, not for posterity, but for Mademoiselle Champmeslé:" she had then forsaken the marquis for the poet, who wrote *Roxane* in *Bajazet* expressly for her.—Ed.

ively in the dramas of her preceptor, it was supposed that love for the poet inspired the actress.

When Racine read aloud he diffused his own enthusiasm; once with Boileau and Nicole, amid a literary circle, they talked of Sophocles, whom Racine greatly admired, but from whom he had never dared to borrow a tragic subject. Taking up a Greek Sophocles, and translating the Œdipus, the French poet became so deeply imbued with the Greek tragedian, that his auditors caught all the emotions of terror and pity. "I have seen," says one of those auditors, "our best pieces represented by our best actors, but never anything approached the agitation which then came over us; and to this distant day I have never lost the recollection of Racine, with the volume in his hand, full of emotion, and we all breathlessly pressing around him."

It was the poet's sensibility that urged him to make the most extraordinary sacrifice that ever poet made; he wished to get rid entirely of that poetical fame to which he owed everything, and which was at once his pleasure, his pride, and his property. His education had been a religious one, in the Port-Royal;* but when Nicole, one of that illustrious fraternity, with undistinguishing fanaticism, had once asserted that all dramatic writers were public poisoners of souls, Racine, in the pride and strength of his genius, had eloquently repelled the denouncement. But now, having yet only half run his unrivalled course, he turned aside, relinquished its glory, repented of his success, and resolved to write no more tragedies.† He determined to enter into the austere

* For an account of this very celebrated religious foundation, its fortunes and misfortunes, see the "Curiosities of Literature," vol. i., p. 94.—Ed.

† Racine ultimately conceived an aversion for his dramatic offspring and could never be induced to edit a proper edition of his works or even give a few lessons in declamation to a juvenile princess, who re-

order of the Chartreux; but his confessor, more rational than his penitent, assured him that a character so feeling as his own, and so long accustomed to the world, could not endure that terrible solitude. He advised him to marry a woman of a serious turn, and that little domestic occupations would withdraw him from the passion he seemed most to dread, that of writing verses.

The marriage of Racine was an act of penance—neither love nor interest had any share in the union. His wife was a good sort of woman, but perhaps the most insensible of her sex; and the properest person in the world to mortify the passion of literary glory, and the momentary exultation of literary vanity.* It is scarcely credible, but most certainly true, since her own son relates the fact, that the wife of Racine had neither seen acted, nor ever read, nor desired to read, the tragedies which had rendered her husband so celebrated throughout Europe; she had only learned some of their titles in conversation. She was as insensible to fortune as to fame. One day, when Racine returned from Versailles, with the princely gift from Louis XIV. of a purse of 1000 louis, he hastened to embrace his wife, and to show her the treasure. But she was full of trouble, for one of the children for two days had not studied. "We will talk of this another time," exclaimed the poet; "at present let us be happy."

But she insisted he ought instantly to reprimand this child, and continued her complaints; while Bolieau in astonishment paced to and fro, perhaps thinking of his Satire on Women, and exclaiming, "What insensibility! Is it possible that a purse of 1000 louis is not worth a thought!" This stoical apathy did not arise in Madame

lected his *Andromaque* for the subject, perhaps out of compliment to the poet, whose first visit became in consequence his last.—Ed.

* The lady he chose was one Catherine de Romanet, whose family was of great respectability but of small fortune. She is not described as possessing any marked personal attractions.—Ed.

Racine from the grandeur, but the littleness, of her mind. Her prayer-books and her children were the sole objects that interested this good woman. Racine's sensibility was not mitigated by his marriage; domestic sorrows weighed heavily on his spirits: when the illness of his children agitated him, he sometimes exclaimed, "Why did I expose myself to all this? Why was I persuaded not to be a Chartreux?" His letters to his children are those of a father and a friend; kind exhortations, or pathetic reprimands; he enters into the most domestic detail, while he does not conceal from them the mediocrity of their fortune. "Had you known him in his family," said Louis Racine, "you would be more alive to his poetical character, you would then know why his verses are always so full of sentiment. He was never more pleased than when, permitted to be absent from the court, he could come among us to pass a few days. Even in the presence of strangers he dared to be a father, and used to join us in our sports. I well remember our processions, in which my sisters were the clergy, I the rector, and the author of 'Athaliah,' chanting with us, carried the cross."

At length this infirm sensibility abridged his days. He was naturally of a melancholic temperament, apt to dwell on objects which occasion pain, rather than on those which exhilarate. Louis Racine observes that his character resembled Cicero's description of himself, more inclined to dread unfortunate events, than to hope for happy ones; *semper magis adversos rerum exitus metuens quam sperans secundos.* In the last incident of his life his extreme sensibility led him to imagine as present a misfortune which might never have occurred.

Madame de Maintenon, one day in conversation with the poet, alluded to the misery of the people. Racine observed it was the usual consequence of long wars: the subject was animating, and he entered into it with all

that enthusiasm peculiar to himself. Madame de Maintenon was charmed with his eloquent effusion, and requested him to give her his observations in writing, assuring him they should not go out of her hand. She was reading his memoir when the king entered her apartment; he took it up, and, after having looked over a few pages, he inquired with great quickness who was the author. She replied it was a secret; but the king was peremptory, and the author was named. The king asked with great dissatisfaction, "Is it because he writes the most perfect verses, that he thinks that he is able to become a statesman?"

Madame de Maintenon told the poet all that had passed, and declined to receive his visits for the present. Racine was shortly after attacked with violent fever. In the languor of recovery he addressed Madame de Maintenon to petition to have his pension freed from some new tax; and he added an apology for his presumption in suggesting the cause of the miseries of the people, with an humiliation that betrays the alarms that existed in his mind. The letter is too long to transcribe, but it is a singular instance how genius can degrade itself when it has placed all its felicity on the varying smiles of those we call the great. Well might his friend Boileau, who had nothing of his sensibility nor imagination, exclaim, with his good sense, of the court:—

Quel séjour étranger, et pour vous et pour moi!

Racine afterwards saw Madame de Maintenon walking in the gardens of Versailles; she drew aside into a retired allée to meet him; she exhorted him to exert his patience and fortitude, and told him that all would end well. "No, madam," he replied, "never!" "Do you then doubt," she said, "either my heart, or my influence?" He replied, "I acknowledge your influence, and know your goodness to me; but I have an aunt who loves me

in quite a different manner. That pious woman every day implores God to bestow on me disgrace, humiliation, and occasions for penitence, and she has more influence than you." As he said these words, the sound of a carriage was heard; "The king is coming!" said Madame de Maintenon; "hide yourself!"

To this last point of misery and degradation was this great genius reduced. Shortly after he died, and was buried at the feet of his master in the chapel of the studious and religious society of Port-Royal.

The sacred dramas of *Esther* and *Athaliah* were among the latter productions of Racine. The fate of *Athaliah*, his masterpiece, was remarkable. The public imagined that it was a piece written only for children, as it was performed by the young scholars of St. Cyr, and received it so coldly that Racine was astonished and disgusted.* He earnestly requested Boileau's opinion, who maintained it was his capital work. "I understand these things," said he, "and the public *y reviendra*." The prediction was a true one, but it was accomplished too late, long after the death of the author; it was never appreciated till it was publicly performed.

Boileau and Racine derived little or no profit from the booksellers. Boileau particularly, though fond of money, was so delicate on this point that he gave all his works away. It was this that made him so bold in railing at those authors *qui mettent leur Apollon aux gages d'un*

*They were written at the request of Madame de Maintenon, for the pupils of her favourite establishment at St. Cyr; she was anxious that they should be perfect in declamation, and she tried them with the poet's *Andromaque*, but they recited it with so much passion and feeling that they alarmed their patroness, who told Racine "it was so well done that she would be careful they should never act that drama again," and urged him to write plays on sacred subjects expressly for their use. He had not written a play for upwards of ten years; he now composed his *Esther*, making that character a flattering reflection of Maintenon's career.—Ed.

libraire, and he declared that he had only inserted these verses,

> Je sai qu'um noble esprit peut sans honte et sans crime
> Tirer de son travail un tribut lêgitime,

to console Racine, who had received some profits from the printing of his tragedies. Those profits were, however, inconsiderable; the truth is, the king remunerated the poets.

Racine's first royal mark of favour was an order signed by Colbert for six hundred livres, to *give him the means of continuing his studies of the belles-lettres.* He received, by an account found among his papers, above forty thousand livres from the cassette of the king, by the hand of the first valet-de-chambre. Besides these gifts, Racine had a pension of four thousand livres as historiographer, and another pension as a man of letters.

Which is the more honourable? to crouch for a salary brought by the hand of the first valet-de-chambre, or to exult in the tribute offered by the public to an author?

OF STERNE.

Cervantes is immortal—Rabelais and Sterne have passed away to the curious.

These fraternal geniuses alike chose their subjects from their own times. Cervantes, with the innocent design of correcting a temporary folly of his countrymen, so that the very success of the design might have proved fatal to the work itself; for when he had cut off the heads of the Hydra, an extinct monster might cease to interest the readers of other times, and other manners. But Cervantes, with judgment equal to his invention, and with a cast of genius made for all times, delighted his contemporaries and charms his posterity. He looked

to the world and collected other follies than the Spanish ones, and to another age than the administration of the duke of Lerma; with more genuine pleasantry than any writer from the days of Lucian, not a solitary spot has soiled the purity of his page; while there is scarcely a subject in human nature for which we might not find some apposite illustration. His style, pure as his thoughts, is, however, a magic which ceases to work in all translations, and Cervantes is not Cervantes in English or in French; yet still he retains his popularity among all the nations of Europe; which is more than we can say even of our Shakspeare!

Rabelais and Sterne were not perhaps inferior in genius, and they were read with as much avidity and delight as the Spaniard. "Le docte Rabelais" had the learning which the Englishman wanted; while unhappily Sterne undertook to satirise false erudition, which requires the knowledge of the true. Though the *Papemanes*, on whom Rabelais has exhausted his grotesque humour and his caustic satire, have not yet walked off the stage, we pay a heavy price in the grossness of his ribaldry and his tiresome balderdash for odd stories and flashes of witty humour. Rabelais hardly finds readers even in France, with the exception of a few literary antiquaries. The day has passed when a gay dissolute abbé could obtain a rich abbey by getting Rabelais by heart, for the perpetual improvement of his patron—and Rabelais is now little more than a Rabelais by tradition.*

* The clergy were not so unfavourable to Rabelais as might have been expected. He was through life protected by the Cardinal Jean du Bellay, Bishop of Paris, who employed him in various important negotiations; and it is recorded of him that he refused a scholar admittance to his table because he had not read his works. This familiarity with his grotesque romance was also shared by Cardinal Duprat who is said to have always carried a copy of it with him, as if it was his breviary. The anecdote of the priest who obtained promotion from

In my youth the world doted on Sterne! Martin Sherlock ranks him among "the luminaries of the century." Forty years ago, young men in their most facetious humours never failed to find the archetypes of society in the Shandy family—every good-natured soul was uncle Toby, every humorist was old Shandy, every child of Nature was Corporal Trim! It may now be doubted whether Sterne's natural dispositions were the humorous or the pathetic: the pathetic has survived!

There is nothing of a more ambiguous nature than strong humour, and Sterne found it to be so; and latterly, in despair, he asserted that "the taste for humour is the gift of heaven!" I have frequently observed how humour, like the taste for olives, is even repugnant to some palates, and have witnessed the epicure of humour lose it all by discovering how some have utterly rejected his favourite relish! Even men of wit may not taste humour! The celebrated Dr. Cheyne, who was not himself deficient in originality of thinking with great learning and knowledge, once entrusted to a friend a remarkable literary confession. Dr. Cheyne assured him that "he could not read 'Don Quixote' with any pleasure, nor had any taste for 'Hudibras' or 'Gulliver;' and that what we call *wit* and *humour* in these authors he considered as false ornaments, and never to be found in those compositions of the ancients which we most admire and esteem."* Cheyne seems to have held Aristophanes and Lucian monstrously cheap! The ancients, indeed, appear not to have possessed that comic quality that we understand as *humour*, nor can I dis-

a knowledge of his works is given in the "Curiosities of Literature," vol. ii., p. 10.—Ed.

* This friend, it now appears, was Dr. King, of Oxford, whose anecdotes have recently been published. This curious fact is given in a strange hodge-podge, entitled "The Dreamer;" a remarkable instance where a writer of learning often conceives that to be humour, which to others is not even intelligible!

cover a word which exactly corresponds with our term *humour* in any language, ancient or modern. Cervantes excels in that sly satire which hides itself under the cloak of gravity, but this is not the sort of humour which so beautifully plays about the delicacy of Addison's page; and both are distinct from the broader and stronger humour of Sterne.

The result of Dr. Cheyne's honest confession was experienced by Sterne, for while more than half of the three kingdoms were convulsed with laughter at his humour, the other part were obdurately dull to it. Take, for instance, two very opposite effects produced by "Tristram Shandy" on a man of strong original humour himself, and a wit who had more delicacy and sarcasm than force and originality. The Rev. Philip Skelton declared that "after reading 'Tristram Shandy,' he could not for two or three days attend seriously to his devotion, it filled him with so many ludicrous ideas." But Horace Walpole, who found his "Sentimental Journey" very pleasing, declares that of "his tiresome 'Tristram Shandy,' he could never get through three volumes."

The literary life of Sterne was a short one: it was a blaze of existence, and it turned his head. With his personal life we are only acquainted by tradition. Was the great sentimentalist himself unfeeling, dissolute, and utterly depraved? Some anecdotes which one of his companions* communicated to me, confirm Garrick's account preserved in Dr. Burney's collections, that "He was more dissolute in his conduct than his writings, and generally drove every female away by his ribaldry. He degenerated in London like an ill-transplanted shrub; the incense of the great spoiled his head, and their ragouts his stomach. He grew sickly and proud—an invalid in body and mind." Warburton declared

* Caleb Whitefoord, the wit once famed for his invention of cross-readings, which appeared under the name of "Papirius Cursor."

that "he was an irrecoverable scoundrel." Authenticated facts are, however, wanting for a judicious summary of the real character of the founder of sentimental writing. An impenetrable mystery hangs over his family conduct; he has thrown many sweet domestic touches in his own memoirs and letters addressed to his daughter: but it would seem that he was often parted from his family. After he had earnestly solicited the return of his wife from France, though she did return, he was suffered to die in utter neglect.

His sermons have been observed to be characterised by an air of levity; he attempted this unusual manner. It was probably a caprice which induced him to introduce one of his sermons in "Tristram Shandy;" it was fixing a diamond in black velvet, and the contrast set off the brilliancy. But he seems then to have had no design of publishing his "Sermons." One day, in low spirits, complaining to Caleb Whitefoord of the state of his finances, Caleb asked him, "if he had no sermons like the one in 'Tristram Shandy'?" But Sterne had no notion that "sermons" were saleable, for two preceding ones had passed unnoticed. "If you could hit on a striking title, take my word for it that they would go down." The next day Sterne made his appearance in raptures. "I have it!" he cried: "Dramatic Sermons by Yorick." With great difficulty he was persuaded to drop this allusion to the church and the playhouse!*

We are told in the short addition to his own memoirs, that "he submitted to fate on the 18th day of March,

* He published these two volumes of discourses under the title of "Yorick's Sermons," because, as he stated in his preface, it would "best serve the booksellers' purpose, as Yorick's name is possibly of the two the more known;" but, fearing the censure of the world, he added a second title-page with his own name, "to ease the minds of those who see a jest, and the danger which lurks under it, where no jest is meant." All this did not free Sterne from much severe criticism.—Ed.

1768, at his lodgings in Bond-street." But it does not appear to have been noticed that Sterne died with neither friend nor relation by his side! a hired nurse was the sole companion of the man whose wit found admirers in every street, but whose heart, it would seem, could not draw one to his death-bed. We cannot say whether Sterne, who had long been dying, had resolved to practise his own principle,—when he made the philosopher Shandy, who had a fine saying for everything, deliver his opinion on death—that "there is no terror, brother Toby, in its looks, but what it borrows from groans and convulsions —and the blowing of noses, and the wiping away of tears with the bottoms of curtains in a dying man's room. Strip it of these, what is it?" I find the moment of his death described in a singular book, the "Life of a Footman." I give it with all its particulars. "In the month of January, 1768, we set off for London. We stopped for some time at Almack's house in Pall-Mall. My master afterwards took Sir James Gray's house in Clifford-street, who was going ambassador to Spain. He now began house-keeping, hired a French cook, a house-maid, and kitchen-maid, and kept a great deal of the best company. About this time, Mr. Sterne, the celebrated author, was taken ill at the silk-bag shop in Old Bond-street. He was sometimes called 'Tristram Shandy,' and sometimes 'Yorick;' a very great favourite of the gentlemen's. One day my master had company to dinner who were speaking about him: the Duke of Roxburgh, the Earl of March, the Earl of Ossory, the Duke of Grafton, Mr. Garrick, Mr. Hume, and Mr. James. 'John,' said my master, 'go and inquire how Mr. Sterne is to-day.' I went, returned, and said,—I went to Mr. Sterne's lodging; the mistress opened the door; I inquired how he did. She told me to go up to the nurse; I went into the room, and he was just a-dying. I waited ten minutes; but in five he said, 'Now it is come!' He put up his hand as if to stop a

blow, and died in a minute. The gentlemen were all very sorry, and lamented him very much."*

Such is the simple narrative of the death of this wit!†

Some letters and papers of Sterne are now before me which reveal a piece of secret history of our sentimentalist. The letters are addressed to a young lady of the name of De Fourmantel, whose ancestors were the Berangers de Fourmantel, who during the persecution of the French Protestants by Louis XIV. emigrated to this country: they were entitled to extensive possessions in St. Domingo, but were excluded by their Protestantism. The elder sister became a Catholic, and obtained the estates; the younger adopted the name of Beranger, and was a

* "Travels in various parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa, during a series of thirty years and upwards, by John Macdonald, a cadet of the family of Kippoch, in Invernesshire, who after the ruin of his family, in 1765, was thrown, when a child, on the wide world, &c. Printed for the author, 1790."—He served a number of noblemen and gentlemen in the humble station of a footman. There is such an air of truth and sincerity throughout the work that I entertain no doubt of its genuineness.

† Sterne was buried in the ground belonging to the parish of St. George's, Hanover Square, situated in the Bayswater Road. His funeral was "attended only by two gentlemen in a mourning coach, no bell tolling;" and his grave has been described as "distinguished by a plain headstone, set up with an unsuitable inscription, by a tippling fraternity of Freemasons." In 1761, long before his death, was published a satire on the tendencies of his writings, mixed with a good deal of personal censure, in a pamphlet entitled "A Funeral Discourse, occasioned by the much lamented death of Mr. Yorick, preached before a very mixed society of Jemmies, Jessamies, Methodists, and Christians, at a nocturnal meeting in Petticoat Lane; by Christopher Flagellan, A. M." As one of the minor "Curiosities of Literature" this tract is worth noting; its author, in a preface, says that "it has been *maliciously*, or rather *stupidly*, reported that the late Mr. Sterne, alias Yorick, is not dead; but that, on the contrary, he is writing a fifth and sixth, and has carried his plan as far as a fiftieth and sixtieth volume of the book called 'The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy;' but they are rather to be attributed to his ghastly ghost, which is said to walk the purlieus of Covent Garden and Drury Lane."—Ed.

governess to the Countess of Bristol. The paper states that Catherine de Fourmantel formed an attachment to Sterne, and that it was the expectation of their friends that they would be united; but that on a visit Sterne became acquainted with a lady, whom he married in the space of one month, after having paid his addresses to Miss de Fourmantel for five years. The consequence was, the total derangement of intellect of this young lady. She was confined in a private madhouse. Sterne twice saw her there; and from observation on her state drew the "Maria" whom he has so pathetically described. The elder sister, at the instigation of the father of the communicator of these letters, came to England, and took charge of the unhappy Maria, who died at Paris. "For many years," says the writer of this statement, "my mother had the *handkerchief* Sterne alludes to." The anxious wish of Sterne was to have his letters returned to him. In this he failed; and such as they are, without date, either of time or place, they are now before me.

The billets-doux are unquestionably authentic, but the statement is inaccurate. I doubt whether the narrative be correct in stating that Sterne married after an acquaintance of one month; for he tells us in his Memoirs that he courted his wife for two years; he, however, married in 1741. The "Sermon of Elijah," which he presents to Miss de Fourmantel in one of these letters, was not published till 1747. Her disordered mind could not therefore have been occasioned by the *sudden* marriage of Sterne. A sentimental intercourse evidently existed between them. He perhaps sought in her sympathy, consolation for his domestic infelicity; he communicates to her the minutest events of his early fame; and these letters, which certainly seem very like love-letters, present a picture of his life in town in the full flower of his fame eager with hope and flushed with success.

LETTER I.

"My dear Kitty,—I beg you will accept of the inclosed sermon, which I do not make you a present of merely because it was wrote by myself, but because there is a beautiful character in it of a tender and compassionate mind in the picture given of Elijah. Read it, my dear Kitty, and believe me when I assure you that I see something of the same kind and gentle disposition in your heart which I have painted in the prophet's, which has attached me so much to you and your interest, that I shall live and die

"Your affectionate and faithful servant,

"Laurence Sterne.

"P. S.—If possible, I will see you this afternoon before I go to Mr. Fothergil's. Adieu, dear friend,—I had the pleasure to drink your health last night."

LETTER II.

"My dear Kitty,—If this billet catches you in bed, you are a lazy, sleepy little slut, and I am a giddy, foolish, unthinking fellow, for keeping you so late up—but this Sabbath is a day of rest, at the same time that it is a day of sorrow; for I shall not see my dear creature today, unless you meet me at Taylor's half an hour after twelve; but in this do as you like. I have ordered Matthew to turn thief, and steal you a quart of honey; what is honey to the sweetness of thee, who art sweeter than all the flowers it comes from! I love you to distraction, Kitty, and will love you on so to eternity—so adieu, and believe, what time will only prove me, that I am,

"Yours."

LETTER III.

"My dear Kitty,—I have sent you a pot of sweetmeats and a pot of honey—neither of them half so sweet

as yourself—but don't be vain upon this, or presume to grow sour upon this character of sweetness I give you; for if you do I shall send you a pot of pickles (by the way of contraries) to sweeten you up, and bring you to yourself again—whatever changes happen to you, believe me that I am unalterably yours, and according to your motto, such a one, my dear Kitty,

"Qui ne changera pas qu'en mourant.

"L. S."

He came up to town in 1760, to publish the two first volumes of "Shandy," of which the first edition had appeared at York the preceding year.

LETTER IV.

"LONDON, *May* 8.

"MY DEAR KITTY,—I have arrived here safe and sound—except for the hole in my heart which you have made, like a dear enchanting slut as you are.—I shall take lodgings this morning in Piccadilly or the Haymarket, and before I send this letter will let you know where to direct a letter to me, which letter I shall wait for by the return of the post with great impatience.

"I have the greatest honours paid me, and most civilities shown me that were ever known from the great; and am engaged already to ten noblemen and men of fashion to dine. Mr. Garrick pays me all and more honour than I could look for: I dined with him to-day, and he has prompted numbers of great people to carry me to dine with them—he has given me an order for the liberty of his boxes, and of every part of his house, for the whole season; and indeed leaves nothing undone that can do me either service or credit. He has undertaken the whole management of the booksellers, and will procure me a great price—but more of this in my next.

"And now, my dear girl, let me assure you of the truest friendship for you that ever man bore towards a

woman—wherever I am, my heart is warm towards you, and ever shall be, till it is cold forever. I thank you for the kind proof you gave me of your desire to make my heart easy in ordering yourself to be denied to you know who—while I am so miserable to be separated from my dear, dear Kitty, it would have stabbed my soul to have thought such a fellow could have the liberty of coming near you.—I therefore take this proof of your love and good principles most kindly—and have as much faith and dependence upon you in it, as if I was at your elbow—would to God I was at this moment—for I am sitting solitary and alone in my bedchamber (ten o'clock at night after the play), and would give a guinea for a squeeze of your hand. I send my soul perpetually out to see what you are a-doing—wish I could convey my body with it—adieu, dear and kind girl. Ever your kind friend and affectionate admirer.

"I go to the oratorio this night. My service to your mamma."

LETTER V.

"My dear Kitty,—Though I have but a moment's time to spare, I would not omit writing you an account of my good fortune; my Lord Fauconberg has this day given me a hundred and sixty pounds a year, which I hold with all my preferment; so that all or the most part of my sorrows and tears are going to be wiped away.—I have but one obstacle to my happiness now left—and what that is you know as well as I.*

"I long most impatiently to see my dear Kitty. I had a purse of guineas given me yesterday by a bishop—all will do well in time.

"From morning to night my lodgings, which by the

* Can this allude to the death of his wife?—that very year he tells his daughter he had taken a house at York, "for your mother and yourself."

bye are the genteelest in town,* are full of the greatest company.—I dined these two days with two ladies of the bedchamber—then with Lord Rockingham, Lord Edgcumb, Lord Winchelsea, Lord Littleton, a bishop, &c., &c.

"I assure you, my dear Kitty, that Tristram is the fashion.—Pray to God I may see my dearest girl soon and well.—Adieu.

"Your affectionate friend,
"L. STERNE."

HUME, ROBERTSON, AND BIRCH.

THE rarest of literary characters is such an historian as Gibbon; but we know the price which he paid for his acquisitions—unbroken and undeviating studies. Wilkes, a mere wit, could only discover the drudgery of compilation in the profound philosopher and painter of men and of nations. A speculative turn of mind, delighting in generalising principles and aggregate views, is usually deficient in that closer knowledge, without which every step we take is on the fairy-ground of conjecture and theory, very apt to shift its unsubstantial scenes. The researchers are like the inhabitants of a city who live among its ancient edifices, and are in the market-places and the streets: but the theorists, occupied by perspective views, with a more artist-like pencil may impose on us a general resemblance of things; but often shall we find in those shadowy outlines how the real objects are nearly, if not wholly lost—for much is given which is fanciful, and much omitted which is true.

Of our two popular historians, Hume and Robertson, alike in character but different in genius, it is much to be lamented that neither came to their tasks with the

* They were the second house from St. Alban's Street, Pall Mall.

previous studies of half a life; and their speculative or theoretical histories are of so much the less value whenever they are deficient in that closer research which can be obtained only in one way; not the most agreeable to those literary adventurers, for such they are, however high they rank in the class of genius, who grasp at early celebrity, and depend more on themselves than on their researches.

In some curious letters to the literary antiquary Dr. Birch, Robertson acknowledges "my chief object is to *adorn*, as far as I am capable of adorning, the history of a period which deserves to be better known." He probably took his lesson from Voltaire, the reigning author of that day, and a great favourite with Robertson. Voltaire indeed tell us, that no writers, but those who have composed tragedies, can throw any interest into a history; that we must know to paint and excite the passions; and that a history, like a dramatic piece, must have situation, intrigue, and catastrophe; an observation which, however true, at least shows that there can be but a moderate quantity of truth in such agreeable narratives. Robertson's notion of *adorning* history was the pleasing labour of genius—it was to amplify into vastness, to colour into beauty, and to arrange the objects of his meditation with a secret artifice of disposition. Such an historian is a sculptor, who, though he display a correct semblance of nature, is not less solicitous to display the miracles of his art, and enlarges his figures to a colossal dimension. Such is theoretical history.

The theoretical historian communicates his own character to his history; and if, like Robertson, he be profound and politic, he detects the secret motives of his actors, unravels the webs of cabinet councils, explains projects that were unknown, and details stratagems which never took place. When we admire the fertile conceptions of the Queen Regent, of Elizabeth, and of

Bothwell, we are often defrauding Robertson of whatever admiration may be due to such deep policy.

When Hume received from Dr. Birch Forbes's Manuscripts and Murdin's State-papers, in great haste he writes to his brother historian:—"What I wrote you with regard to Mary, &c., was from the printed histories and papers. But I am now sorry to tell you that by Murdin's State-papers, the matter is put beyond all question. I got these papers during the holidays by Dr. Birch's means; and as soon as I read them *I ran to Millar*, and desired him very earnestly to stop the publication of your history till I should write to you, and give you an opportunity of correcting a mistake so important; but he absolutely refused compliance. He said that your book was now finished; that the whole narrative of Mary's trial must be wrote over again; that it was uncertain whether the new narrative could be brought within the same compass with the old: that this change would require the cancelling a great many sheets; that there were scattered *passages through the volumes founded on your theory.*" What an interview was this of Andrew Millar and David Hume! truly the bibliopole shone to greater advantage than the *two theoretical historians!* And so the world had, and eagerly received, what this critical bookseller declared "required the new printing (that is, the new writing) of a great part of the edition!"

When this successful history of Scotland invited Robertson to pursue this newly-discovered province of philosophical or theoretical history, he was long irresolute in his designs, and so unpractised in those researches he was desirous of attempting, that his admirers would have lost his popular productions, had not a fortunate introduction to Dr. Birch, whose life had been spent in historical pursuits, enabled the Scottish historian to open many a clasped book, and to drink of many a sealed fountain. Robertson was long undecided whether to write the his-

tory of Greece, of Leo X., that of William III. and Queen Anne, or that of Charles V., and perhaps many other subjects.

We have a curious letter of Lord Orford's, detailing the purport of a visit Robertson paid to him to inquire after materials for the reigns of William and Anne; he seemed to have little other knowledge than what he had taken upon trust. "I painted to him," says Lord Orford, "the difficulties and the want of materials—but the booksellers will out-argue me." Both the historian and "the booksellers" had resolved on another history: and Robertson looked upon it as a task which he wished to have set to him, and not a glorious toil long matured in his mind. But how did he come prepared to the very dissimilar subjects he proposed? When he resolved to write the history of Charles V., he confesses to Dr. Birch: "I never had *access to any copious libraries*, and do not pretend to *any extensive knowledge of authors;* but I have made a list of such as I thought most essential to the subject, and have put them down *as I found them mentioned in any book I happened to read.* Your erudition and knowledge of books is infinitely superior to mine, and I doubt not but you will be able to make such additions to my catalogue as may be of great use to me. I know very well, and to my sorrow, *how servilely historians copy from one another*, and how little is to be learned from reading many books; but at the same time, when one writes upon any particular period, it is both necessary and decent for him to consult every book relating to it upon which he can lay his hands." This avowal proves that Robertson knew little of the history of Charles V. till he began the task; and he further confesses that "he had no knowledge of the Spanish or German," which, for the history of a Spanish monarch and a German emperor, was somewhat ominous of the nature of the projected history.

Yet Robertson, though he once thus acknowledged, as we see, that he "never had access to any copious libraries, and did not *pretend to any extensive knowledge of authors*," seems to have acquired from his friend, Dr. Birch, who was a genuine researcher in manuscripts as well as printed books, a taste even for bibliographical ostentation, as appears by that pompous and voluminous list of authors prefixed to his "History of America;" the most objectionable of his histories, being a perpetual apology for the Spanish Government, adapted to the meridian of the court of Madrid, rather than to the cause of humanity, of truth, and of philosophy. I understand, from good authority, that it would not be difficult to prove that our historian had barely examined them, and probably had never turned over half of that deceptive catalogue. Birch thought so, and was probably a little disturbed at the overwhelming success of our eloquent and penetrating historian, while his own historical labours, the most authentic materials of history, but not history itself, hardly repaid the printer. Birch's publications are either originals, that is, letters or state-papers; or they are narratives drawn from originals, for he never wrote but from manuscripts. They are the true *materia historica.*

Birch, however, must have enjoyed many a secret triumph over our popular historians, who had introduced their beautiful philosophical history into our literature; the dilemma in which they sometimes found themselves must have amused him. He has thrown out an oblique stroke at Robertson's "pomp of style, and fine eloquence," "which too often tend to disguise the real state of the facts."* When he received from Robertson the present of his "Charles V.," after the just tribute of his praise, he adds some regret that the historian had not been so fortunate as to have seen Burghley's State-papers, "pub-

* See "Curiosities of Literature," vol. iii., p. 387.

lished since Christmas," and a manuscript trial of Mary, Queen of Scots, in Lord Royston's possession. Alas! such is the fate of *speculative history;* a Christmas may come, and overturn the elaborate castle in the air. Can we forbear a smile when we hear Robertson, who had projected a history of British America, of which we possess two chapters, when the rebellion and revolution broke out, congratulate himself that he had not made any further progress? "It is lucky that my American History was not finished before this event; how many plausible theories that I should have been entitled to form are contradicted by what has now happened!" A fair confession!

Let it not be for one moment imagined that this article is designed to depreciate the genius of Hume and Robertson, who are the noblest of our modern authors, and exhibit a perfect idea of the literary character.

Forty-four years ago, I transcribed from their originals the correspondence of the historian with the literary antiquary. For the satisfaction of the reader, I here preserve these literary relics.

Letters between Dr. Birch and Dr. W. Robertson, relative to the Histories of Scotland and of Charles V.

"TO DR. BIRCH.

"GLADSMUIR, 19 *Sept.* 1757.

"REVEREND SIR,—Though I have not the good fortune to be known to you personally, I am so happy as to be no stranger to your writings, to which I have been indebted for much useful instruction. And as I have heard from my friends, Sir David Dalrymple and Mr. Davidson, that your disposition to oblige was equal to your knowledge, I now presume to write to you and to ask your assistance without any apology.

"I have been engaged for some time in writing the

history of Scotland from the death of James V. to the accession of James VI. to the throne of England. My chief object is to adorn (as far as I am capable of adorning) the history of a period which, on account of the greatness of the events, and their close connection with the transactions in England, deserves to be better known. But as elegance of composition, even where a writer can attain that, is but a trivial merit without historical truth and accuracy, and as the prejudices and rage of factions, both religious and political, have rendered almost every fact, in the period which I have chosen, a matter of doubt or of controversy, I have therefore taken all the pains in my power to examine the evidence on both sides with exactness. You know how copious the *materia historica* in this period is. Besides all the common historians and printed collections of papers, I have consulted several manuscripts which are to be found in this country. I am persuaded that there are still many manuscripts worth my seeing to be met with in England, and for that reason I propose to pass some time in London this winter. I am impatient, however, to know what discoveries of this kind I may expect, and what are the treasures before me, and with regard to this I beg leave to consult you.

"I was afraid for some time that Dr. Forbes's Collections had been lost upon his death, but I am glad to find by your 'Memoirs' that they are in the possession of Mr. Yorke. I see likewise that the 'Dépêches de Beaumont' are in the hands of the same gentleman. But I have no opportunity of consulting your 'Memoirs' at present, and I cannot remember whether the 'Dépêches de Fenelon' be still preserved or not. I see that Carte has made a great use of them in a very busy period from 1563 to 1576. I know the strength of Carte's prejudices so well, that I dare say many things may be found there that he could not see, or would not publish. May I beg the

favour of you to let me know whether Fenelon's papers be yet extant and accessible, and to give me some general idea of what Dr. Forbes's Collections contain with regard to Scotland, and whether the papers they consist of are different from those published by Haynes, Anderson, &c. I am far from desiring that you should enter into any detail that would be troublesome to you, but some short hint of the nature of these Collections would be extremely satisfying to my curiosity, and I shall esteem it a great obligation laid upon me.

"I have brought my work almost to a conclusion. If you would be so good as to suggest anything that you thought useful for me to know or to examine into, I shall receive your directions with great respect and gratitude.

"I am, with sincere esteem,

"Rev^{d} Sir, Y^{r} m. ob. & m. h. S^{r},

"Wm. Robertson."

TO DR. BIRCH.

"Edinburgh, 1 *Jan.* 1759.

"Dear Sir,—If I had not considered a letter of mere compliment as an impertinent interruption to one who is so busy as you commonly are, I would long before this have made my acknowledgments to you for the civilities which you was so good as to show me while I was in London. I had not only a proof of your obliging disposition, but I reaped the good effects of it.

"The papers to which I got access by your means, especially those from Lord Royston, have rendered my work more perfect than it could have otherwise been. My history is now ready for publication, and I have desired Mr. Millar to send you a large paper copy of it in my name, which I beg you may accept as a testimony of my regard and of my gratitude. He will likewise trans-

mit to you another copy, which I must entreat you to present to my Lord Royston, with such acknowledgments of his favours toward me as are proper for me to make. I have printed a short appendix of original papers. You will observe that there are several inaccuracies in the press work. Mr. Millar grew impatient to have the book published, so that it was impossible to send down the proofs to me. I hope, however, the papers will be abundantly intelligible. I published them only to confirm my own system, about particular facts, not to obtain the character of an antiquarian. If, upon perusing the book, you discover any inaccuracies, either with regard to style or facts, whether of great or of small importance, I will esteem it a very great favour if you'll be so good as to communicate them to me. I shall likewise be indebted to you, if you'll let me know what reception the book meets with among the literati of your acquaintance. I hope you will be particularly pleased with the critical dissertation at the end, which is the production of a co-partnership between me and your friend Mr. Davidson. Both Sir D. Dalrymple and he offer compliments to you. If Dean Tucker be in town this winter, I beg you will offer my compliments to him.

"I am, w. great regard, D^r. Sir,

"Y^r m. obed^t. & mst. o. ser^t.,

"William Robertson.

"My address is, one of the ministers of Ed."

TO DR. BIRCH.

"*Edinburgh*, 13 *Dec.* 1759.

"Dear Sir,—I beg leave once more to have recourse to your good nature and to your love of literature, and to presume upon putting you to a piece of trouble. After considering several subjects for another history, I have at last fixed upon the reign of Charles V., which

contains the first establishment of the present political system of Europe. I have begun to labour seriously upon my task. One of the first things requisite was to form a catalogue of books which must be consulted. As I never had access to very copious libraries, I do not pretend to any extensive knowledge of authors, but I have made a list of such as I thought most essential to the subject, and have put them down just in the order which they occurred to me, or as I found them mentioned in any book I happened to read. I beg you would be so good as to look it over, and as your erudition and knowledge of books is infinitely superior to mine, I doubt not but you'll be able to make such additions to my catalogue as may be of great use to me. I know very well, and to my sorrow, how servilely historians copy from one another, and how little is to be learned from reading many books, but at the same time when one writes upon any particular period, it is both necessary and decent for him to consult every book relating to it, upon which he can lay his hands. I am sufficiently master of French and Italian; but have no knowledge of the Spanish or German tongues. I flatter myself that I shall not suffer much by this, as the two former languages, together with the Latin, will supply me with books in abundance. Mr. Walpole informed me some time ago, that in the catalogue of Harleian MSS. in the British Museum, there is a volume of papers relating to Charles V., it is No. 295. I do not expect much from it, but it would be extremely obliging if you would take the trouble of looking into it and of informing me in general what it contains. In the catalogue I have inclosed, this mark × is prefixed to all the books which I can get in this country; if you yourself, or any friend with whom you can use freedom, have any of the other books in my list, and will be so good as to send them to Mr. Millar, he will forward them to me, and I shall receive them

with great gratitude and return them with much punctuality. I beg leave to offer compliments to all our common friends, and particularly to Dean Tucker, if he be in town this season. I wish it were in my power to confer any return for all the trouble you have taken in my behalf——"

FROM DR. BIRCH TO THE REV. DR. ROBERTSON AT EDINBURGH.

"*London*, 3 *Jany.* 1760.

"Dear Sir,—Your letter of the 13 Decr. was particularly agreeable to me, as it acquainted me with your resolution to resume your historic pen, and to undertake a subject which, from its importance and extent, and your manner of treating it, will be highly acceptable to the public.

"I have perused your list of books to be consulted on this occasion; and after transcribing it have delivered it to Mr. Millar; and shall now make some additions to it.

"The new 'Histoire d'Allemagne' by Father Barre, chancellor of the University of Paris, published a few years ago in several volumes in q°., is a work of very good credit, and to be perused by you; as is likewise the second edition of 'Abrégé chronologique de l'Histoire & du Droit public d'Allemagne,' just printed at Paris, and formed upon the plan of President Henault's 'Nouvel Abrégé chronologique de l'Histoire de France,' in which the reigns of Francis I. and Henry II. will be proper to be seen by you.

"The 'Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire du Cardinal Granvelle,' by Father Rosper Levesque, a Benedictin monk, which were printed at Paris in two vols. 12°. in 1753, contain some particulars relating to Charles V. But this performance is much less curious than it might have been, considering that the author had the advantage

of a vast collection, above an hundred volumes of the Cardinal's original papers, at Besançon. Among these are the papers of his eminence's father, who was chancellor and minister to the Emperor Charles V.

"Bishop Burnet, in the 'Summary of Affairs before the Restoration,' prefixed to his 'History of his Own Time,' mentions a life of Frederick Elector Palatine, who first reformed the Palatinate, as curiously written by Hubert Thomas Leodius. This book, though a very rare one, is in my study and shall be sent to you. You will find in it many facts relating to your Emperor. The manuscript was luckily saved when the library of Heydelberg was plundered and conveyed to the Vatican after the taking of that city in 1622, and it was printed in 1624, at Francfort, in 4^to^. The writer had been secretary and councillor to the elector.

"Another book which I shall transmit to you is a valuable collection of state papers, made by Mons^r^. Rivier, and printed at Blois, in 1665, in two vols. f°. They relate to the reigns of Francis I., Henry II., and Francis II. of France. The indexes will direct you to such passages as concern the Emperor.

"As Mons^r^. Amelot de la Houssaie, who was extremely conversant in modern history, has, in the 1^st^. tome of his 'Mémoires Historiques Politiques et Littéraires,' from p. 156 to 193, treated of Charles V., I shall add that book to my parcel.

"Varillas's 'Life of Henry II. of France' should be looked into, though that historian has not at present much reputation for exactness and veracity.

"Dr. Fiddes, in his 'Life of Cardinal Wolsey,' has frequent occasion to introduce the Emperor, his contemporary, of which Bayle in his Dictionary gives us an express article and not a short one, for it consists of eight of his pages.

"Roger Ascham, Queen Elizabeth's preceptor, when

he was secretary to S^r. Richard Morysin amb. from K. Edward VI. to the imperial court, wrote to a friend of his 'a report and discourse of the affairs and state of Germany and the Emperor Charles's court. This was printed in the reign of Queen Elizabeth; but the copies of that edition are now very rare. However this will be soon made public, being reprinted in an edition of all the author's English works now in the press.

"The 'Epîtres des Princes,' translated from the Italian by Belleforest, will probably supply you with some few things to your purpose.

"Vol. 295 among the Harleian MSS. contains little remarkable except some letters from Henry VIII's amb^r. in Spain, in 1518, of which you may see an abstract in the printed catalogue.

"In Dr. Hayne's 'Collection of State Papers in the Hatfield History,' p. 56, is a long letter of the lord of the council of Henry VIII., in 1546, to his amb^r. with the Emperor."

TO DR. BIRCH.

Extract from a letter of Dr. Robertson, dated College of Edinburgh, Oct. 8, 1765.

"* * * I have met with many interruptions in carrying on my 'Charles V.,' partly from bad health, and partly from the avocations arising from performing the duties of my office. But I am now within sight of land. The historical part of the work is finished, and I am busy with a preliminary book, in which I propose to give a view of the progress in the state of society, laws, manners, and arts, from the irruption of the barbarous nations to the beginning of the sixteenth century. This is a laborious undertaking; but I flatter myself that I shall be able to finish it in a few months. I have kept the books you was so good as to send me, and shall return them carefully as soon as my work is done."

OF VOLUMINOUS WORKS INCOMPLETE BY THE DEATHS OF THE AUTHORS.

In those "Dances of Death" where every profession is shown as taken by surprise in the midst of their unfinished tasks, where the cook is viewed in flight, oversetting his caldron of soup, and the physician, while inspecting his patient's urinal, is himself touched by the grim visitor, one more instance of poor mortality may be added in the writers of works designed to be pursued through a long series of volumes. The French have an appropriate designation for such works, which they call "*ouvrages de longue haleine*," and it has often happened that the *haleine* has closed before the work.

Works of literary history have been particularly subject to this mortifying check on intellectual enterprise, and human life has not yielded a sufficient portion for the communication of extensive acquirement! After years of reading and writing, the literary historian, who in his innumerable researches is critical as well as erudite, has still to arbitrate between conflicting opinions; to resolve on the doubtful, to clear up the obscure, and to grasp at remote researches:—but he dies, and leaves his favourite volumes little more than a project!

Feelingly the antiquary Hearne laments this general forgetfulness of the nature of all human concerns in the mind of the antiquary, who is so busied with other times and so interested for other persons than those about him. "It is the business of a good antiquary, as of a good man, to have mortality always before him."

A few illustrious scholars have indeed escaped the fate reserved for most of their brothers. A long life, and the art of multiplying that life not only by an early attachment to study, but by that order and arrangement which shortens our researches, have sufficed for a Muratori. With such a student time was a great capital which he

knew to put out at compound interest; and this Varro of the Italians, who performed an infinite number of things in the circumscribed period of ordinary life, appears not to have felt any dread of leaving his voluminous labours unfinished, but rather of wanting one to begin. This literary Alexander thought he might want a world to conquer! Muratori was never perfectly happy unless employed in two large works at the same time, and so much dreaded the state of literary inaction, that he was incessantly importuning his friends to suggest to him objects worthy of his future composition. The flame kindled in his youth burned clear in his old age; and it was in his senility that he produced the twelve quartos of his *Annali d'Italia* as an addition to his twenty-nine folios of his *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, and the six folios of the *Antiquitates Medii Ævi!* Yet these vast edifices of history are not all which this illustrious Italian has raised for his fatherland. Gibbon in his Miscellaneous Works has drawn an admirable character of Muratori.

But such a fortunate result has rarely accompanied the labours of the literary worthies of this order. Tiraboschi indeed lived to complete his great national history of Italian literature; but, unhappily for us, Warton, after feeling his way through the darker ages of our poetry, and just conducting us to a brighter region, in planning the map of the country of which he had only a Pisgah view, expires amid his volumes! Our poetical antiquary led us to the opening gates of the paradise of our poetry, when, alas! they closed on him and on us! The most precious portion of Warton's history is but the fragment of a fragment.

Life passes away in collecting materials—the marble lies in blocks—and sometimes a colonnade is erected, or even one whole side of a palace indicates the design of the architect. Count Mazzuchelli, early in life, formed a

noble but too mighty a project, in which, however, he considerably advanced. This was an historical and critical account of the memoirs and the writings of Italian authors; he even commenced the publication in alphabetical order, but the six invaluable folios we possess only contain the authors the initial letters of whose names are A and B! This great literary historian had finished for the press other volumes, which the torpor of his descendants has suffered to lie in a dormant state. Rich in acquisition, and judicious in his decisions, the days of the patriotic Mazzuchelli were freely given to the most curious and elegant researches in his national literature; his correspondence is said to consist of forty volumes; with eight of literary memoirs, besides the lives of his literary contemporaries;—but Europe has been defrauded of the hidden treasures.

The history of Baillet's "Jugemens des Sçavans sur les Principaux Ouvrages des Auteurs," or Decisions of the Learned on the Learned, is a remarkable instance how little the calculations of writers of research serve to ascertain the period of their projected labour. Baillet passed his life in the midst of the great library of the literary family of the Lamoignons, and as an act of gratitude arranged a classified catalogue in thirty-two folio volumes; it indicated not only what any author had professedly composed on any subject, but also marked those passages relative to the subject which other writers had touched on. By means of this catalogue, the philosophical patron of Baillet at a single glance discovered the great results of human knowledge on any object of his inquiries. This catalogue, of equal novelty and curiosity, the learned came to study, and often transcribed its precious notices. Amid this world of books, the skill and labour of Baillet prompted him to collect the critical opinions of the learned, and from the experience he had acquired in the progress of his colossal catalogue, as a

preliminary, sketched one of the most magnificent plans of literary history. This instructive project has been preserved by Monnoye in his edition. It consists of six large divisions, with innumerable subdivisions. It is a map of the human mind, and presents a view of the magnitude and variety of literature, which few can conceive. The project was too vast for an individual; it now occupies seven quartos, yet it advanced no farther than the critics, translators, and poets, forming little more than the first, and a commencement of the second great division; to more important classes the laborious projector never reached!

Another literary history is the "Bibliothèque Françoise" of Goujet, left unfinished by his death. He had designed a classified history of French literature; but of its numerous classes he has only concluded that of the translators, and not finished the second he had commenced, of the poets. He lost himself in the obscure times of French Literature, and consumed sixteen years on his eighteen volumes!

A great enterprise of the Benedictines, the "Histoire Littéraire de la France," now consists of twelve large quartos, which even its successive writers have only been able to carry down to the close of the twelfth century!*

David Clement, a bookseller, and a book-lover, designed the most extensive bibliography which had ever appeared; this history of books is not a barren nomenclature, the particulars and dissertations are sometimes curious: but the diligent life of the author only allowed him to proceed as far as the letter H! The alphabetical order which some writers have adopted has often proved a sad memento of human life! The last edition of our own "Biographia Britannica," feeble, imperfect, and inadequate as the writers were to the task the booksellers had

* This work has been since resumed.

chosen them to execute, remains still a monument which every literary Englishman may blush to see so hopelessly interrupted.

When Le Grand D'Aussy, whose "Fabliaux" are so well known, adopted, in the warmth of antiquarian imagination, the plan suggested by the Marquis de Paulmy, first sketched in the *Mēlanges tirés d'une grande Bibliothèque*, of a picture of the domestic life of the French people from their earliest periods, the subject broke upon him like a vision; it had novelty, amusement, and curiosity: "*le sujet m'en parut neuf, riche et piquant.*" He revelled amid the scenes of their architecture, the interior decorations of their houses, their changeable dress, their games, and recreations; in a word, on all the parts which were most adapted to amuse the fancy. But when he came to compose the more detailed work, the fairy scene faded in the length, the repetition, and the never-ending labour and weariness; and the three volumes which we now possess, instead of sports, dresses, and architecture, exhibit only a very curious, but not always a very amusing, account of the food of the French nation.

No one has more fully poured out his vexation of spirit—he may excite a smile in those who have never experienced this toil of books and manuscripts—but he claims the sympathy of those who would discharge their public duties so faithfully to the public. I shall preserve a striking picture of these thousand task-works, coloured by the literary pangs of the voluminous author, who is doomed never to finish his curious work:—

"Endowed with a courage at all proofs, with health which, till then, was unaltered, and which excess of labour has greatly changed, I devoted myself to write the lives of the learned of the sixteenth century. Renouncing all kinds of pleasure, working ten to twelve hours a-day, extracting, ceaselessly copying; after this

sad life I now wished to draw breath, turn over what I had amassed, and arrange it. I found myself possessed of many thousands of *bulletins*, of which the longest did not exceed many lines. At the sight of this frightful chaos, from which I was to form a regular history, I must confess that I shuddered; I felt myself for some time in a *stupor and depression of spirits;* and now actually that I have finished this work, *I cannot endure the recollection of that moment of alarm without a feeling of involuntary terror.* What a business is this, good God, of a compiler! In truth, it is too much condemned; it merits some regard. At length I regained courage; I returned to my researches: I have completed my plan, though every day I was forced to *add*, to *correct*, to *change my facts as well as my ideas;* SIX times has my hand *recopied my work;* and, however fatiguing this may be, it certainly is not that portion of my task which has cost me most."

The history of the "Bibliotheca Brittanica" of the late Dr. Watt may serve as a mortifying example of the length of labour and the brevity of life. To this gigantic work the patient zeal of the writer had devoted twenty years; he had just arrived at the point of publication, when death folded down his last page; the son who, during the last four years, had toiled under the direction of his father, was chosen to occupy his place. The work was in the progress of publication, when the son also died; and strangers now reap the fruits of their combined labours.

One cannot forbear applying to this subject of voluminous designs, which must be left unfinished, the forcible reflection of Johnson on the planting of trees: "There is a frightful interval between the seed and timber. He that calculates the growth of trees has the unwelcome remembrance of the shortness of life driven hard upon him. He knows that he is doing what will never benefit

himself; and, when he rejoices to see the stem arise, is disposed to repine that another shall cut it down.

OF DOMESTIC NOVELTIES AT FIRST CONDEMNED.

It is amusing enough to discover that things, now considered among the most useful and even agreeable acquisitions of domestic life, on their first introduction ran great risks of being rejected, by the ridicule or the invective which they encountered. The repulsive effect produced on mankind by the mere strangeness of a thing, which at length we find established among our indispensable conveniences, or by a practice which has now become one of our habits, must be ascribed sometimes to a proud perversity in our nature; sometimes to the crossing of our interests, and to that repugnance to alter what is known for that which has not been sanctioned by our experience. This feeling has, however, within the last half century considerably abated; but it proves, as in higher matters, that some philosophical reflection is required to determine on the usefulness, or the practical ability, of every object which comes in the shape of novelty or innovation. Could we conceive that man had never discovered the practice of washing his hands, but cleansed them as animals do their paws, he would for certain have ridiculed and protested against the inventor of soap, and as tardily, as in other matters, have adopted the invention. A reader, unaccustomed to minute researches, might be surprised, had he laid before him the history of some of the most familiar domestic articles which, in their origin, incurred the ridicule of the wits, and had to pass through no short ordeal of time in the strenuous opposition of the zealots against domestic novelties. The subject requires no grave investigation; we will,

therefore, only notice a few of universal use. They will sufficiently demonstrate that, however obstinately man moves in "the march of intellect," he must be overtaken by that greatest of innovators—Time itself; and that, by his eager adoption of what he had once rejected, and by the universal use of what he once deemed unuseful, he will forget, or smile at the difficulties of a former generation, who were baffled in their attempts to do what we all are now doing.

Forks are an Italian invention; and in England were so perfect a novelty in the days of Queen Bess, that Fynes Moryson, in his curious "Itinerary," relating a bargain with the patrone of a vessel which was to convey him from Venice to Constantinople, stipulated to be fed at his table, and to have "his glass or cup to drink in peculiar to himself, with his knife, spoon, and *fork*." This thing was so strange that he found it necessary to describe it.* It is an instrument "to hold the meat

* Modern research has shown that forks were not so entirely unknown as was imagined when the above was written. In vol. xxvii. of the "Archæologia," published by the Society of Antiquaries, is an engraving of a fork and spoon of the Anglo-Saxon era; they were found with fragments of ornaments in silver and brass, all of which had been deposited in a box, of which there were some decayed remains; together with about seventy pennies of sovereigns from Coenwolf, King of Mercia (A.D. 796), to Ethelstan (A.D. 878, 890). The inventories of royal and noble persons in the middle ages often name forks. They were made of precious materials, and sometimes adorned with jewels like those named in the inventory of the Duke of Normandy, in 1363, "une cuiller d'or et une fourchette, et aux deux fonts deux saphirs;" and in the inventory of Charles V. of France, in 1380, "une cuillier et une fourchette d'or, où il y a ij balays et X perles." Their use seems to have been a luxurious appendage to the dessert, to lift fruit, or take sops from wine. Thus Piers Gaveston, the celebrated favourite of Edward III., is described to have had three silver forks to eat pears with; and the Duchess of Orleans, in 1390, had one fork of gold to take sops from wine (à prendre la soupe où vin). They appear to have been entirely restricted to this use, and never adopted as now, to lift meat at ordinary meals. They were carried about the

while he cuts it; for they hold it ill-manners that one should touch the meat with his hands."* At the close of the sixteenth century were our ancestors eating as the Turkish *noblesse* at present do, with only the free use of their fingers, steadying their meat and conveying it to their mouths by their mere manual dexterity. They were, indeed, most indelicate in their habits, scattering on the table-cloth all their bones and parings. To purify their tables, the servant bore a long wooden "voiding-knife," by which he scraped the fragments from the table, into a basket, called "a voider." Beaumont and Fletcher describe the thing,

> They sweep the table with a wooden dagger.

Fabling Paganism had probably raised into a deity the little man who first taught us, as Ben Jonson describes its excellence—

> the laudable use of forks,
> To the sparing of napkins.

This personage is well-known to have been that odd compound, Coryat the traveller, the perpetual butt of the wits. He positively claims this immortality. "I myself thought good to imitate the Italian fashion by this FORKED *cutting of meat*, not only while I was in Italy, but also in Germany, and oftentimes in England since I came home." Here the use of forks was, however, long ridiculed; it was reprobated in Germany, where some uncleanly saints actually preached against the unnatural custom "as an insult on Providence, not to touch our meat with our fingers." It is a curious fact, that forks were long interdicted in the Congregation de St.

person in decorated cases, and only used on certain occasions, and then only by the highest classes; hence their comparative rarity.—ED.

* Moryson's "Itinerary," part i., p. 208,

Maur, and were only used after a protracted struggle between the old members, zealous for their traditions, and the young reformers, for their fingers.* The allusions to the use of the fork, which we find in all the dramatic writers through the reigns of James the First and Charles the First, show that it was still considered as a strange affectation and novelty. The fork does not appear to have been in general use before the Restoration! On the introduction of forks there appears to have been some difficulty in the manner they were to be held and used. In *The Fox*, Sir Politic Would-be, counselling Peregrine at Venice, observes—

> Then you must learn the use
> And handling of your silver fork at meals.

Whatever this art may be, either we have yet to learn it, or there is more than one way in which it may be practised. D'Archenholtz, in his "Tableau de l'Angleterre," asserts that "an Englishman may be discovered anywhere, if he be observed at table, because he places his fork upon the left side of his plate; a Frenchman by using the fork alone without the knife; and a German, by planting it perpendicularly into his plate; and a Russian, by using it as a toothpick."

Toothpicks seem to have come in with forks, as younger brothers of the table, and seem to have been borrowed from the nice manners of the stately Venetians. This implement of cleanliness was, however, doomed to the same anathema as the fantastical ornament of "the complete Signor," the Italianated Englishman. How would the writers, who caught "the manners as they rise," have been astonished that now no decorous person would be unaccompanied by what Massinger in contempt calls

> Thy case of toothpicks and thy silver fork!

* I find this circumstance concerning forks mentioned in the "Dictionnaire de Trevoux."

Umbrellas, in my youth, were not ordinary things; few but the macaroni's of the day, as the dandies were then called, would venture to display them. For a long while it was not usual for men to carry them without incurring the brand of effeminacy; and they were vulgarly considered as the characteristics of a person whom the mob then hugely disliked—namely, a mincing Frenchman. At first a single umbrella seems to have been kept at a coffee-house for some extraordinary occasion —lent as a coach or chair in a heavy shower—but not commonly carried by the walkers. The *Female Tatler* advertises "the young gentleman belonging to the custom-house, who, in fear of rain, borrowed *the umbrella from Wilks' Coffee-house*, shall the next time be welcome to the maid's *pattens*." An umbrella carried by a man was obviously then considered an extreme effeminacy. As late as in 1778, one John Macdonald, a footman, who has written his own life, informs us, that when he carried "a fine silk umbrella, which he had brought from Spain, he could not with any comfort to himself use it; the people calling out 'Frenchman! why don't you get a coach?'" The fact was, that the hackney-coachmen and the chairmen, joining with the true *esprit de corps*, were clamorous against this portentous rival. This footman, in 1778, gives us further information:—"At this time there were no umbrellas worn in London, except in noblemen's and gentlemen's houses, where there was a large one hung in the hall to hold over a lady or a gentleman, if it rained, between the door and their carriage." His sister was compelled to quit his arm one day, from the abuse he drew down on himself by his umbrella. But he adds that "he persisted for three months, till they took no further notice of this novelty. Foreigners began to use theirs, and then the English. Now it is become a great trade in London."* The state of our

* Umbrellas are, however, an invention of great antiquity, and may

population might now, in some degree, be ascertained by the number of umbrellas.

Coaches, on their first invention, offered a fruitful source of declamation, as an inordinate luxury, particularly among the ascetics of monkish Spain. The Spanish biographer of Don John of Austria, describing that golden age, the good old times, when they only used "carts drawn by oxen, riding in this manner to court," notices that it was found necessary to prohibit coaches by a royal proclamation, "to such a height was this *infernal vice* got, which has done so much injury to Castile." In this style nearly every domestic novelty has been attacked. The injury inflicted on Castile by the introduction of coaches could only have been felt by the purveyors of carts and oxen for a morning's ride. The same circumstances occurred in this country. When coaches began to be kept by the gentry, or were hired out, a powerful party found their "occupation gone!" Ladies would no longer ride on pillions behind their foot men, nor would take the air, where the air was purest, on the river. Judges and counsellors from their inns would no longer be conveyed by water to Westminister Hall, or jog on with all their gravity on a poor palfrey. Considerable bodies of men were thrown out of their habitual employments—the watermen, the hackneymen, and the

be seen in the sculptures of ancient Egypt and Assyria. They are also depicted on early Greek vases. But the most curious fact connected with their use in this country seems to be the knowledge our Saxon ancestors had of them; though the use, in accordance with the earliest custom, appears to have been as a shelter or mark of distinction for royalty. In Cædmon's "Metrical Paraphrase of Parts of Scripture," now in the British Museum (Harleian MS. No. 603), an Anglo-Saxon manuscript of the tenth century, is the drawing of a king, who has an umbrella held over his head by an attendant, in the same way as it is borne over modern eastern kings. The form is precisely similar to those now in use, though, as noted above, they were an entire novelty when re-introduced in the last century.—Ed.

saddlers. Families were now jolted, in a heavy wooden machine, into splendour and ruin. The disturbances and opposition these coaches created we should hardly now have known, had not Taylor, the Water-poet* and man, sent down to us an invective against coaches, in 1623, dedicated to all who are grieved with "the world running on wheels."

Taylor, a humorist and satirist, as well as waterman, conveys some information in this rare tract of the period when coaches began to be more generally used—"Within our memories our nobility and gentry could ride well-mounted, and sometimes walk on foot gallantly attended with fourscore brave fellows in blue coats, which was a glory to our nation far greater than forty of these leathern timbrels. Then the name of a *coach* was heathen Greek. Who ever saw, but upon extraordinary occasions, Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Francis Drake ride in a coach? They made small use of coaches; there were but few in those times, and they were deadly foes to sloth and effeminacy. It is in the memory of many when in the whole kingdom there was not one! It is a doubtful question whether the devil brought *tobacco* into England in *a coach*, for both appeared at the same time." It appears that families, for the sake of their exterior show, miserably contracted their domestic establishment; for Taylor, the Water-poet, complains that when they used formerly to keep from ten to a hundred proper serving-men, they now made the best shift, and for the sake of their coach and horses had only "a butterfly page, a trotting footman, and a stiff-drinking coachman, a cook, a clerk, a steward, and a butler, which hath forced an army of tall fellows to the gatehouses," or prisons. Of

* Taylor was originally a Thames waterman, hence the term, "Water-poet" given him. His attack upon coaches was published with this quaint title, "The world runnes on wheeles, or, odds, betwixt carts and coaches." It is an unsparing satire.—ED.

one of the evil effects of this new fashion of coach-riding this satirist of the town wittily observes, that, as soon as a man was knighted, his lady was lamed for ever, and could not on any account be seen but in a coach. As hitherto our females had been accustomed to robust exercise, on foot or on horseback, they were now forced to substitute a domestic artificial exercise in sawing billets, swinging, or rolling the great roller in the alleys of their garden. In the change of this new fashion they found out the inconvenience of a sedentary life passed in their coaches.*

Even at this early period of the introduction of coaches, they were not only costly in the ornaments—in velvets, damasks, taffetas, silver and gold lace, fringes of all sorts—but their greatest pains were in matching their coach-horses. "They must be all of a colour, longitude, latitude, cressitude, height, length, thickness, breadth (I muse they do not weigh them in a pair of balances); and when once matched with a great deal of care, if one of them chance to die, then is the coach maimed till a meet mate be found, whose corresponding may be as equivalent to the surviving palfrey, in all respects, as like as a broom to a besom, barm to yeast, or codlings to boiled apples." This is good natural humour. He proceeds—"They use

* Stow, in his "Chronicles," has preserved the date of the first introduction of coaches into England, as well as the name of the first driver, and first English coachmaker. "In the year 1564 Guilliam Boonen, a Dutchman, became the queen's coachman, and was the first that brought the use of coaches into England. After a while divers great ladies, with as great jealousie of the queen's displeasure, made them coaches, and rid in them up and down the country, to the great admiration of all the beholders; but then, by little and little, they grew usual among the nobility and others of sorte, and within twenty years became a great trade of coachmaking;" and he also notes that in the year of their introduction to England "Walter Rippon made a *coche* for the Earl of Rutland, which was the first *coche* that was ever made in England."—Ed.

more diligence in matching their coach-horses than in the marriage of their sons and daughters." A great fashion, in its novelty, is often extravagant; true elegance and utility are never at first combined; good sense and experience correct its caprices. They appear to have exhausted more cost and curiosity in their equipages, on their first introduction, than since they have become objects of ordinary use. Notwithstanding this humorous invective on the calamity of coaches, and that "housekeeping never decayed till coaches came into England; and that a ten-pound rent now was scarce twenty shillings then, till the witchcraft of the coach quickly mounted the price of all things." The Water-poet, were he now living, might have acknowledged that if, in the changes of time, some trades disappear, other trades rise up, and in an exchange of modes of industry the nation loses nothing. The hands which, like Taylor's, rowed boats, came to drive coaches. These complainers on all novelties, unawares always answer themselves. Our satirist affords us a most prosperous view of the condition of "this new trade of coachmakers, as the gainfullest about the town. They are apparelled in sattins and velvets, are masters of the parish, vestrymen, and fare like the Emperor Heliogabalus and Sardanapalus—seldom without their mackeroones, Parmisants (macaroni, with Parmesan cheese, I suppose), jellies and kickshaws, with baked swans, pastries hot or cold, red-deer pies, which they have from their debtors, worships in the country!" Such was the sudden luxurious state of our first great coachmakers! to the deadly mortification of all watermen, hackneymen, and other conveyancers of our loungers, thrown out of employ!

Tobacco.—It was thought, at the time of its introduction, that the nation would be ruined by the use of tobacco. Like all novel tastes the newly-imported leaf maddened all ranks among us. "The money spent in

smoke is unknown," said a writer of that day, lamenting over this "new trade of tobacco, in which he feared that there were more than seven thousand tobacco-houses." James the First, in his memorable "Counterblast to Tobacco," only echoed from the throne the popular cry; but the blast was too weak against the smoke, and vainly his paternal majesty attempted to terrify his liege children that "they were making a sooty kitchen in their inward parts, soiling and infecting them with an unctuous kind of soot, as hath been found in some great tobacco-eaters, that after their death were opened." The information was perhaps a pious fraud. This tract, which has incurred so much ridicule, was, in truth, a meritorious effort to allay the extravagance of the moment. But such popular excesses end themselves; and the royal author might have left the subject to the town-satirists of the day, who found the theme inexhaustible for ridicule or invective.

Coal.—The established use of our ordinary fuel, coal, may be ascribed to the scarcity of wood in the environs of the metropolis. Its recommendation was its cheapness, however it destroys everything about us. It has formed an artificial atmosphere which envelopes the great capital, and it is acknowledged that a purer air has often proved fatal to him who, from early life, has only breathed in sulphur and smoke. Charles Fox once said to a friend, "I cannot live in the country; my constitution is not strong enough." Evelyn poured out a famous invective against "London Smoke." "Imagine," he cries, "a solid tentorium or canopy over London, what a mass of smoke would then stick to it! This fuliginous crust now comes down every night on the streets, on our houses, the waters, and is taken into our bodies. On the water it leaves a thin web or pellicle of dust dancing upon the surface of it, as those who bath in the Thames discern, and bring home on their bodies." Evelyn has

detailed the gradual destruction it effects on every article of ornament and price; and "he heard in France, that those parts lying southwest of England, complain of being infected with smoke from our coasts, which injured their vines in flower." I have myself observed at Paris, that the books exposed to sale on stalls, however old they might be, retained their freshness, and were in no instance like our own, corroded and blackened, which our coal-smoke never fails to produce. There was a proclamation, so far back as Edward the First, forbidding the use of sea-coal in the suburbs, on a complaint of the nobility and gentry, that they could not go to London on account of the noisome smell and thick air. About 1550, Hollingshed foresaw the general use of sea-coal from the neglect of cultivating timber. Coal fires have now been in general use for three centuries. In the country they persevered in using wood and peat. Those who were accustomed to this sweeter smell declared that they always knew a Londoner, by the smell of his clothes, to have come from coal-fires. It must be acknowledged that our custom of using coal for our fuel has prevailed over good reasons why we ought not to have preferred it. But man accommodates himself even to an offensive thing whenever his interest predominates.

Were we to carry on a speculation of this nature into graver topics, we should have a copious chapter to write of the opposition to new discoveries. Medical history supplies no unimportant number. On the improvements in anatomy by Malpighi and his followers, the senior professors of the university of Bononia were inflamed to such a pitch that they attempted to insert an additional clause in the solemn oath taken by the graduates, to the effect that they would not permit the principles and conclusions of Hippocrates, Aristotle, and Galen, which had been approved of so many ages, to be overturned by any person. In phlebotomy we have a curious instance.

In Spain, to the sixteenth century, they maintained that when the pain was on the one side they ought to bleed on the other. A great physician insisted on a contrary practice; a civil war of opinion divided Spain; at length they had recourse to courts of law; the novelists were condemned; they appealed to the emperor, Charles the Fifth; he was on the point of confirming the decree of the court, when the Duke of Savoy died of a pleurisy, having been legitimately bled. This puzzled the emperor, who did not venture on a decision.

The introduction of antimony and the jesuits' bark also provoked legislative interference; decrees and ordinances were issued, and a civil war raged among the medical faculty, of which Guy Patin is the copious historian. Vesalius was incessantly persecuted by the public prejudices against dissection; Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood led to so protracted a controversy, that the great discovery was hardly admitted even in the latter days of the old man; Lady Wortley Montague's introduction of the practice of inoculation met the same obstinate resistance as, more recently, that of vaccination startled the people. Thus objects of the highest importance to mankind, on their first appearance, are slighted and contemned. Posterity smiles at the ineptitude of the preceding age, while it becomes familiar with those objects which that age has so eagerly rejected. Time is a tardy patron of true knowledge.

A nobler theme is connected with the principle we have here but touched on—the gradual changes in public opinion—the utter annihilation of false notions, like those of witchcraft, astrology, spectres, and many other superstitions of no remote date, the hideous progeny of imposture got on ignorance, and audacity on fear. But one impostor reigns paramount, the plausible opposition to novel doctrines which may be subversive of some ancient ones; doctrines which probably shall one day be

as generally established as at present they are utterly decried, and which the interests of corporate bodies oppose with all their cumbrous machinery; but artificial machinery becomes perplexed in its movements when worn out by the friction of ages.

DOMESTICITY; OR, A DISSERTATION ON SERVANTS.

The characteristics of servants have been usually known by the broad caricatures of the satirists of every age, and chiefly by the most popular—the writers of comedy. According to these exhibitions, we must infer that the vices of the menial are necessarily inherent to his condition, and consequently that this vast multitude in society remain ever in an irrecoverably ungovernable state. We discover only the cunning depredator of the household; the tip-toe spy, at all corners—all ear, all eye: the parasitical knave—the flatterer of the follies, and even the eager participator of the crimes, of his superior. The morality of servants has not been improved by the wonderful revelations of Swift's "Directions," where the irony is too refined, while it plainly inculcates the practice. This celebrated tract, designed for the instruction of the masters, is more frequently thumbed in the kitchen, as a manual for the profligate domestic. Servants have acknowledged that some of their base doings have been suggested to them by their renowned satirist.

Bentham imagined, that were all the methods employed by thieves and rogues described and collected together, such a compilation of their artifices and villanies would serve to put us on our guard. The theorist of legislation seems often to forget the metaphysical state of man. With the vitiated mind, that latent sympathy of evil

which might never have been called forth but by the occasion, has often evinced how too close an inspection of crime may grow into criminality itself. Hence it is, that when some monstrous and unusual crime has been revealed to the public, it rarely passes without a sad repetition. A link in the chain of the intellect is struck, and a crime is perpetrated which else had not occurred.

Listen to the counsels which one of the livery gives a brother, more stupid but more innocent than himself. I take the passage from that extraordinary Spanish comedy, in twenty-five acts, the *Spanish Bawd*. It was no doubt designed to expose the arts and selfishness of the domestic, yet we should regret that the *Spanish Bawd* was as generally read by servants as Swift's "Directions":—

"Serve not your master with this foolish loyalty and ignorant honesty, thinking to find firmness on a false foundation, as most of these masters now-a-days are. Gain friends, which is a during and lasting commodity; live not on hopes, relying on the vain promises of masters. The masters love more themselves than their servants, nor do they amiss; and the like love ought servants to bear to themselves. Liberality was lost long ago—rewards are grown out of date. Every one is now for himself, and makes the best he can of his servant's service, serving his turn, and therefore they ought to do the same, for they are less in substance. Thy master is one who befools his servants, and wears them out to the very stumps, looking for much service at their hands. Thy master cannot be thy friend, such difference is there of estate and condition between you two."

This passage, written two centuries ago, would find an echo of its sentiments in many a modern domestic. These notions are sacred traditions among the livery. We may trace them from Terence and Plautus, as well as Swift and Mandeville. Our latter great cynic has left a fright-

ful picture of the state of the domestics, when it seems "they had experienced professors among them, who could instruct the graduates in iniquity seven hundred illiberal arts how to cheat, impose upon, and find out the blind side of their masters." The footmen, in Mandeville's day, had entered into a society together, and made laws to regulate their wages, and not to carry burdens above two or three pounds weight, and a common fund was provided to maintain any suit at law against any rebellious master. This seems to be a confederacy which is by no means dissolved.

Lord Chesterfield advises his son not to allow his upper man to doff his livery, though this valet was to attend his person, when the toilet was a serious avocation requiring a more delicate hand and a nicer person than he who was to walk before his chair, or climb behind his coach. This searching genius of philosophy and *les petites mœurs* solemnly warned that if ever this man were to cast off the badge of his order, he never would resume it. About this period the masters were menaced by a sort of servile war. The famous farce of *High Life below Stairs* exposed with great happiness the impudence and the delinquencies of the parti-coloured clans. It roused them into the most barefaced opposition; and, as ever happens to the few who press unjust claims on the many, in the result worked the reform they so greatly dreaded.* One of the grievances in society was then an

* The farce was produced in 1759, when it was the custom to admit any servant in livery free to the upper gallery, as they were supposed to be in attendance on their masters. Their foibles and dishonesty being so completely hit off in the play incensed them greatly; and they created such an uproar that it was resolved to exclude them in future. In Edinburgh the opposition to the play produced still greater scenes of violence, and the lives of some of the performers were threatened. It at last became necessary for their masters to stop this outbreak on the part of their servants; and alter the whole system of the household economy which led to such results.—Ed.

anomalous custom, for it was only practised in our country, of a guest being highly taxed in dining with a family whose establishment admitted of a numerous train. Watchful of the departure of the guest, this victim had to pass along a line of domestics, arranged in the hall, each man presenting the visitor with some separate article, of hat, gloves, coat, and cane, claiming their "vails." It would not have been safe to refuse even those who, with nothing to present, still held out the hand, for their attentions to the diner-out.*

When a slave was deemed not a person, but a thing marketable and transferable, the single principle judged sufficient to regulate the mutual conduct of the master and the domestic was, to command and to obey. It seems still the sole stipulation exacted by the haughty from the menial. But this feudal principle, unalleviated by the just sympathies of domesticity, deprives authority of its grace, and service of its zeal. To be served well, we should be loved a little; the command of an excellent master is even grateful, for the good servant delights to be useful. The slave repines, and such is the domestic destitute of any personal attachment for his master. Whoever was mindful of the interests of him whose beneficence is only a sacrifice to his pomp? The master dresses and wages highly his pampered train; but this is

* These *vails*, supposed to be the free gratuity of the invited to the servants of the inviter, were ultimately so managed that persons paid servants by that mode only—levying a kind of black-mail on their friends, which ran through all society. "The wages are nothing," says a noble lady's servant in one of Smollet's novels, "but the *vails* are enormous." The consequence was, that masters and mistresses had little control over them; they are said in some instances to have paid for their places, as some servants do at inns, where the situation was worth having, owing to the large parties given, and gaming, then so prevalent, being well-attended. It was ended by a mutual understanding all over the three kingdoms, after the riots which resulted from the production of the play noted above.—ED.

the calculated cost of state-liveries, of men measured by a standard, for a Hercules in the Hall, or an Adonis for the drawing-room; but at those times, when the domestic ceases to be an object in the public eye, he sinks into an object of sordid economy, or of merciless caprice. His personal feelings are recklessly neglected. He sleeps where there is neither light nor air; he is driven when he is already exhausted; he begins the work of midnight, and is confined for hours with men like himself, who fret, repine, and curse. They have their tales to compare together; their unhallowed secrets to disclose. The masters and the mistresses pass by them in review, and little deem they how oft the malignant glance or the malicious whisper follow their airy steps. To shorten such tedious hours, the servants familiarise themselves with every vicious indulgence, for even the occupation of such domestics is little more than a dissolute idleness. A cell in Newgate does not always contain more corruptors than a herd of servants congregated in our winter halls. It is to be lamented that the modes of fashionable life demand the most terrible sacrifices of the health, the happiness, and the morals of servants. Whoever perceives that he is held in no esteem stands degraded in his own thoughts. The heart of the simple throbs with this emotion; but it hardens the villain who would rejoice to avenge himself: it makes the artful only the more cunning; it extorts from the sullen a cold unwilling obedience, and it stings even the good-tempered into insolence.

South, as great a wit as a preacher, has separated, by an awful interval, the superior and the domestic. "A servant dwells remote from all knowledge of his lord's purposes; he lives as a kind of foreigner under the same roof; a domestic, yet a foreigner too." This exhibits a picture of feudal manners. But the progress of society in modern Europe has since passed through a mighty

evolution. In the visible change of habits, of feelings, of social life, the humble domestic has approximated to, and communicated more frequently even with "his lord." The domestic is now not always a stranger to "his lord's purposes," but often their faithful actor—their confidential counsellor—the mirror in which his lordship contemplates on his wishes personified.

This reflection, indeed, would have violated the dignity of the noble friend of Swift, Lord Orrery. His lordship censures the laughter in "Rabelais' easy chair" for having directed such intense attention to affairs solely relating to servants. "Let him jest with dignity, and let him be ironical upon *useful* subjects, leaving *poor slaves* to eat their porridge, or drink their small beer, in such vessels as they shall think proper." This lordly criticism has drawn down the lightning of Sir Walter Scott:—"The noble lord's feelings of dignity deemed nothing worthy of attention that was unconnected with the highest orders of society." Such, in truth, was too long the vicious principle of those monopolists of personal distinction, the mere men of elevated rank.

Metropolitan servants, trained in depravity, are incapacitated to comprehend how far the personal interests of servants are folded up with the interests of the house they inhabit. They are unconscious that they have any share in the welfare of the superior, save in the degree that the prosperity of the master contributes to the base and momentary purposes of the servant. But in small communities we perceive how the affections of the master and the domestic may take root. Look in an ancient retired family, whose servants often have been born under the roof they inhabit, and where the son is serving where the father still serves; and sometimes call the sacred spot of their cradle and their grave by the proud and endearing term of "our house." We discover this in whole countries where luxury has not removed the classes of

society at too wide distances from each other, to deaden their sympathies. We behold this in agrestic Switzerland, among its villages and its pastures; in France, among its distant provinces; in Italy, in some of its decayed cities; and in Germany, where simple manners and strong affections mark the inhabitants of certain localities. Holland long preserved its primitive customs; and there the love of order promotes subordination, though its free institutions have softened the distinctions in the ranks of life, and there we find a remarkable evidence of domesticity. It is not unusual in Holland for servants to call their masters uncle, their mistresses aunt, and the children of the family their cousins. These domestics participating in the comforts of the family, become naturalized and domiciliated; and their extraordinary relatives are often adopted by the heart. An heroic effort of these domestics has been recorded; it occurred at the burning of the theatre at Amsterdam, where many rushed into the flames, and nobly perished in the attempt to save their endeared families.

It is in limited communities that the domestic virtues are most intense; all concentrating themselves in their private circles, in such localities there is no public—no public which extorts so many sacrifices from the individual. Insular situations are usually remarkable for the warm attachment and devoted fidelity of the domestic, and the personal regard of families for their servants. This genuine domesticity is strikingly displayed in the island of Ragusa, on the coast of Dalmatia: for there they provide for the happiness of the humble friends of the house. Boys, at an early age, are received into families, educated in writing, reading, and arithmetic. Some only quit their abode, in which they were almost born, when tempted by the stirring spirit of maritime enterprise. They form a race of men who are much sought after for servants; and the term applied to them

of "Men of the Gulf," is a sure recommendation of character for unlimited trust and unwearying zeal.

The mode of providing for the future comforts of their maidens is a little incident in the history of benevolence, which we must regret is only practised in such limited communities. Malte-Brun, in his "Annales des Voyages," has painted a scene of this nature, which may read like some romance of real life. The girls, after a service of ten years, on one great holiday, an epoch in their lives, receive the ample reward of their good conduct. On that happy day the mistress and all the friends of the family prepare for the maiden a sort of dowry or marriage-portion. Every friend of the house sends some article; and the mistress notes down the gifts, that she may return the same on a similar occasion. The donations consist of silver, of gowns, of handkerchiefs, and other useful articles for a young woman. These tributes of friendship are placed beside a silver basin, which contains the annual wages of the servant; her relatives from the country come, accompanied by music, carrying baskets covered with ribbons and loaded with fruits, and other rural delicacies. They are received by the master himself, who invites them to the feast, where the company assemble, and particularly the ladies. All the presents are reviewed. The servant introduced kneels to receive the benediction of her mistress, whose grateful task is then to deliver a solemn enumeration of her good qualities, concluding by announcing to the maiden that, having been brought up in the house, if it be her choice to remain, from henceforward she shall be considered as one of the family. Tears of affection often fall during this beautiful scene of true domesticity, which terminates with a ball for the servants, and another for the superiors. The relatives of the maiden return homewards with their joyous musicians; and, if the maiden prefers her old domestic abode, she receives an increase of wages,

and at a succeeding period of six years another jubilee provides her second good fortune. Let me tell one more story of the influence of this passion of domesticity in the servant;—its merit equals its novelty. In that inglorious attack on Buenos Ayres, where our brave soldiers were disgraced by a recreant general, the negroes, slaves as they were, joined the inhabitants to expel the invaders. On this signal occasion the city decreed a public expression of their gratitude to the negroes, in a sort of triumph, and at the same time awarded the freedom of eighty of their leaders. One of them, having shown his claims to the boon, declared, that to obtain his freedom had all his days formed the proud object of his wishes: his claim was indisputable; yet now, however, to the amazement of the judges, he refused his proffered freedom! The reason he alleged was a singular refinement of heartfelt sensibility:—"My kind mistress," said the negro, "once wealthy, has fallen into misfortunes in her infirm old age. I work to maintain her, and at intervals of leisure she leans on my arm to take the evening air. I will not be tempted to abandon her, and I renounce the hope of freedom that she may know she possesses a slave who never will quit her side."

Although I have been travelling out of Europe to furnish some striking illustrations of the powerful emotion of domesticity, it is not that we are without instances in the private history of families among ourselves. I have known more than one where the servant has chosen to live without wages, rather than quit the master or the mistress in their decayed fortunes; and another where the servant cheerfully worked to support her old lady to her last day.

Would we look on a very opposite mode of servitude, turn to the United States. No system of servitude was ever so preposterous. A crude notion of popular freedom in the equality of ranks abolished the very designa-

tion of "servant," substituting the fantastic term of "helps." If there be any meaning left in this barbarous neologism, their aid amounts to little; their engagements are made by the week, and they often quit their domicile without the slightest intimation.

Let none, in the plenitude of pride and egotism, imagine that they exist independent of the virtues of their domestics. The good conduct of the servant stamps a character on the master. In the sphere of domestic life they must frequently come in contact with them. On this subordinate class, how much the happiness and even the welfare of the master may rest! The gentle offices of servitude began in his cradle, and await him at all seasons and in all spots, in pleasure or in peril. Feelingly observes Sir Walter Scott—"In a free country an individual's happiness is more immediately connected with the personal character of his valet, than with that of the monarch himself." Let the reflection not be deemed extravagant if I venture to add, that the habitual obedience of a devoted servant is a more immediate source of personal comfort than even the delightfulness of friendship and the tenderness of relatives—for these are but periodical; but the unbidden zeal of the domestic, intimate with our habits, and patient of our waywardness, labours for us at all hours. It is those feet which hasten to us in our solitude; it is those hands which silently administer to our wants. At what period of life are even the great exempt from the gentle offices of servitude?

Faithful servants have never been commemorated by more heartfelt affection than by those whose pursuits require a perfect freedom from domestic cares. Persons of sedentary occupations, and undisturbed habits, abstracted from the daily business of life, must yield unlimited trust to the honesty, while they want the hourly attentions and all the cheerful zeal, of the thoughtful domestic.

The mutual affections of the master and the servant have often been exalted into a companionship of feelings.

When Madame de Genlis heard that Pope had raised a monument not only to his father and to his mother, but also to the faithful servant who had nursed his earliest years, she was so suddenly struck by the fact, that she declared that "This monument of gratitude is the more remarkable for its singularity, as I know of no other instance." Our churchyards would have afforded her a vast number of tomb-stones erected by grateful masters to faithful servants;"* and a closer intimacy with the domestic privacy of many public characters might have displayed the same splendid examples. The one which appears to have so strongly affected her may be found on the east end of the outside of the parish church of Twickenham. The stone bears this inscription:—

To the memory of
MARY BEACH,
who died November 5, 1725, aged 78.
ALEXANDER POPE,
whom she nursed in his infancy,
and constantly attended for thirty-eight years,
Erected this stone
In gratitude to a faithful Servant.

The original portrait of Shenstone was the votive gift of a master to his servant, for, on its back, written by the poet's own hand, is the following dedication:—"This picture belongs to Mary Cutler, given her by her master, William Shenstone, January 1st, 1754, in acknowledgment of her native genius, her magnanimity, her tenderness, and her fidelity.—W. S." We might refer to many similar evidences of the domestic gratitude of such masters to old and attached servants. Some of these tributes may be familiar to most readers. The solemn author of the

* Even our modern cemeteries perpetuate this feeling, and exhibit many grateful EPITAPHS ON SERVANTS.

"Night Thoughts" inscribed an epitaph over the grave of his man-servant; the caustic Gifford poured forth an effusion to the memory of a female servant, fraught with a melancholy tenderness which his muse rarely indulged.

The most pathetic, we had nearly said, and had said justly, the most sublime, development of this devotion of a master to his servant, is a letter addressed by that powerful genius Michael Angelo to his friend Vasari, on the death of Urbino, an old and beloved servant.* Published only in the voluminous collection of the letters of Painters, by Bottari, it seems to have escaped general notice. We venture to translate it in despair: for we feel that we must weaken its masculine yet tender eloquence.

MICHAEL ANGELO TO VASARI.

"My dear George,—I can but write ill, yet shall not your letter remain without my saying something. You know how Urbino has died. Great was the grace of God when he bestowed on me this man, though now heavy be the grievance and infinite the grief. The grace was that when he lived he kept me living; and in dying he has taught me to die, not in sorrow and with regret, but with a fervent desire of death. Twenty and six years had he served me, and I found him a most rare and faithful man; and now that I had made him rich, and expected to lean on him as the staff and the repose of my old age, he is taken from me, and no other hope remains than that of seeing him again in Paradise. A sign of

*It is delightful to note the warm affection displayed by the great sculptor toward his old servant on his death-bed. The man who would beard princes and the pope himself, when he felt it necessary to assert his independent character as an artist, and through life evinced a somewhat hard exterior, was soft as a child in affectionate attention to his dying domestic, anticipating all his wants by a personal attendance at his bedside. This was no light service on the part of Michael Angelo, who was himself at the time eighty-two years of age.—Ed.

God was this happy death to him; yet, even more than this death, were his regrets increased to leave me in this world the wretch of many anxieties, since the better half of myself has departed with him, and nothing is left for me than this loneliness of life."

Even the throne has not been too far removed from this sphere of humble humanity, for we discover in St. George's Chapel a mural monument erected by order of one of our late sovereigns as the memorial of a female servant of a favourite daughter. The inscription is a tribute of domestic affection in a royal bosom, where an attached servant became a cherished inmate.

King George III.
Caused to be interred near this place the body of
MARY GASCOIGNE,
Servant to the Princess Amelia;
and this stone
to be inscribed in testimony of his grateful sense
of the faithful services and attachment
of an amiable young woman to
his beloved Daughter.

This deep emotion for the tender offices of servitude is not peculiar to the refinement of our manners, or to modern Europe; it is not the charity of Christianity alone which has hallowed this sensibility, and confessed this equality of affection, which the domestic may participate: monumental inscriptions, raised by grateful masters to the merits of their slaves, have been preserved in the great collections of Grævius and Gruter.*

* There are several instances of Roman heads of houses who consecrate "to themselves and their servants" the sepulchres they erect in their own lifetime, as if in death they had no desire to be divided from those who had served them faithfully. An instance of affectionate regard to the memory of a deceased servant occurs in the collection at Nismes; it is an inscription by one Sextus Arius Varcis, to Hermes, "his best servant" (servo optimo). Fabretti has preserved an inscription which records the death of a child, T. Alfacius Scanti-

PRINTED LETTERS IN THE VERNACULAR IDIOM.

Printed Letters, without any attention to the selection, is so great a literary evil, that it has excited my curiosity to detect the first modern who obtruded such formless things on public attention. I conjectured that, whoever he might be, he would be distinguished for his egotism and his knavery. My hypothetical criticism turned out to be correct. Nothing less than the audacity of the unblushing Piero Aretino could have adventured on this project; he claims the honour, and the critics do not deny it, of being the first who published Italian letters. Aretino had the hardihood to dedicate one volume of his letters to the King of England, another to the Duke of Florence; a third to Hercules of Este, a relative of Pope Julius Third —evidently insinuating that his letters were worthy to be read by the royal and the noble.

Among these letters there is one addressed to Mary, Queen of England, on her resuscitation of the ancient faith, which offers a very extraordinary catalogue of the ritual and ceremonies of the Romish church. It is indeed impossible to translate into Protestant English the multiplied nomenclature of offices which involve human life in never-ceasing service. As I know not where we can find so clear a perspective of this amazing contrivance to fetter with religious ceremonies the freedom of the human mind, I present the reader with an accurate translation of it:—

anius, by one Alfacius Severus, his master, by which it appears he was the child of an old servant, who was honoured by bearing the prenomen of the master, and who is also styled in the epitaph "his sweetest freedman" (liberto dulcissimo).—Ed.

"*Pietro Aretino to the Queen of England.*

"The voices of Psalms, the sound of Canticles, the breath of Epistles and the Spirit of Gospels, had need unloose the language of my words in congratulating your superhuman Majesty on having not only restored conscience to the minds and hearts of Englishmen and taken deceitful heresy away from them, but on bringing it to pass, when it was least hoped for, that charity and faith were again born and raised up in them; on which sudden conversion triumphs our sovereign Pontiff Julius, the College, and the whole of the clergy, so that it seems in Rome as if the shades of the old Cæsars with visible effect showed it in their very statues; meanwhile the pure mind of his most blessed Holiness canonizes you, and marks you in the catalogue among the Catharines and Margarets, and dedicates you," &c.

"The stupor of so stupendous a miracle is not the stupefaction of stupid wonder; and all proceeds from your being in the grace of God in every deed, whose incomprehensible goodness is pleased with seeing you, in holiness of life and innocence of heart, cause to be restored in those proud countries, solemnity to Easters, abstinence to Lents, sobriety to Fridays, parsimony to Saturdays, fulfilment to vows, fasts to vigils, observances to seasons, chrism to creatures, unction to the dying, festivals to saints, images to churches, masses to altars, lights to lamps, organs to quires, benedictions to olives, robings to sacristies, and decencies to baptisms; and that nothing may be wanting (thanks to your pious and most entire nature), possession has been regained to offices, of hours; to ceremonies, of incense; to reliques, of shrines; to the confessed, of absolutions; to priests, of habits; to preachers, of pulpits; to ecclesiastics, of pre-eminences; to scriptures, of interpreters; to hosts, of communions; to the poor, of alms; to the wretched, of

hospitals; to virgins, of monasteries; to fathers, of convents; to the clergy, of orders; to the defunct, of obsequies; to tierces, noons, vespers, complins, ave-maries, and matins, the privileges of daily and nightly bells."

The fortunate temerity of Aretino gave birth to subsequent publications by more skilful writers. Nicolo Franco closely followed, who had at first been the amanuensis of Aretino, then his rival, and concluded his literary adventures by being hanged at Rome; a circumstance which at the time must have occasioned regret that Franco had not, in this respect also, been an imitator of his original, a man equally feared, flattered, and despised.

The greatest personages and the most esteemed writers of that age were perhaps pleased to have discovered a new and easy path to fame; and since it was ascertained that a man might become celebrated by writings never intended for the press, and which it was never imagined could confer fame on the writers, volumes succeeded volumes, and some authors are scarcely known to posterity but as letter-writers. We have the too-elaborate epistles of Bembo, secretary to Leo X., and the more elegant correspondence of Annibal Caro; a work which, though posthumous, and published by an affectionate nephew, and therefore too undiscerning a publisher, is a model of familiar letters.

These collections, being found agreeable to the taste of their readers, novelty was courted by composing letters more expressly adapted to public curiosity. The subjects were now diversified by critical and political topics, till at length they descended to one more level with the faculties, and more grateful to the passions of the populace of readers—Love! Many grave personages had already, without being sensible of the ridiculous, languished through tedious odes and starch sonnets. Doni, a bold literary projector, who invented a literary

review both of printed and manuscript works, with not inferior ingenuity, published his *love-letters;* and with the felicity of an Italian diminutive, he fondly entitled them "Pistolette Amorose del Doni," 1552, 8vo. These Pistole were designed to be little epistles, or billets-doux but Doni was one of those fertile authors who have too little time of their own to compose short works. Doni was too facetious to be sentimental, and his quill was not plucked from the wing of Love. He was followed by a graver pedant, who threw a heavy offering on the altar of the Graces; Parabosco, who in six books of "Lettere Amorose," 1565, 8vo, was too phlegmatic to sigh over his inkstand.

Denina mentions Lewis Pasqualigo of Venice as an improver of these amatory epistles, by introducing a deeper interest and a more complicate narrative. Partial to the Italian literature, Denina considers this author as having given birth to those *novels* in the form of *letters*, with which modern Europe has been inundated; and he refers the curious in literary researches, for the precursors of these *epistolary novels*, to the works of those Italian wits who flourished in the sixteenth century.

"The Worlds" of Doni, and the numerous whimsical works of Ortensio Landi, and the "Circe" of Gelli, of which we have more than one English translation, which, under their fantastic inventions, cover the most profound philosophical views, have been considered the precursors of the finer genius of "The Persian Letters," that fertile mother of a numerous progeny, of D'Argens and others.

The Italians are justly proud of some valuable collections of letters, which seem peculiar to themselves, and which may be considered as the works of *artists.* They have a collection of "Lettere di Tredici Uomini Illustri," which appeared in 1571; another more curious, relating to princes—"Lettere de' Principi le quali o si scrivono

da Principi a Principi, o ragionano di Principi;" Venezia, 1581, in 3 vols. quarto.

But a treasure of this kind, peculiarly interesting to the artist, has appeared in more recent times, in seven quarto volumes, consisting of the original letters of the great painters, from the golden age of Leo X., gradually collected by Bottari, who published them in separate volumes. They abound in the most interesting facts relative to the arts, and display the characteristic traits of their lively writers. Every artist will turn over with delight and curiosity these genuine effusions; chronicles of the days and the nights of their vivacious brothers.

It is a little remarkable that he who claims to be the first satirist in the English language, claims also, more justly perhaps, the honour of being the first author who published familiar letters. In the dedication of his Epistles to Prince Henry, the son of James the First, Bishop Hall claims the honour of introducing "this new fashion of discourse by epistles, new to our language, usual to others; and as novelty is never without plea of use, more free, more familiar." Of these epistles, in six decades, many were written during his travels. We have a collection of Donne's letters abounding with his peculiar points, at least witty, if not natural.

As we became a literary nation, familiar letters served as a vehicle for the fresh feelings of our first authors. Howell, whose Epistolæ bears his name, takes a wider circumference in "Familiar Letters, domestic and foreign, historical, political, and philosophical, upon emergent occasions." The "emergent occasions" the lively writer found in his long confinement in the Fleet—that English Parnassus! Howell is a wit, who, in writing his own history, has written that of his times; he is one of the few whose genius, striking in the heat of the moment only current coin, produces finished medals for the cabinet. His letters are still published. The taste which

had now arisen for collecting letters, induced Sir Tobie Mathews, in 1660, to form a volume, of which many, if not all, are genuine productions of their different writers.

The dissipated elegance of Charles II. inspired freedom in letter-writing. The royal emigrant had caught the tone of Voiture. We have some few letters of the wits of this court, but that school of writers, having sinned in gross materialism, the reaction produced another of a more spiritual nature, in a romantic strain of the most refined sentiment. Volumes succeeded volumes from pastoral and heroic minds. Katherine Philips, in the masquerade-dress of "The Matchless Orinda," addressed Sir Charles Cottrel, her grave "Poliarchus;" while Mrs. Behn, in her loose dress, assuming the nymph-like form of "Astræa," pursued a gentleman, concealed in a domino, under the name of "Lycidas."

Before our letters reached to nature and truth, they were strained by one more effort after novelty; a new species appeared, "From the Dead to the Living," by Mrs. Rowe: they obtained celebrity. She was the first who, to gratify the public taste, adventured beyond the Styx; the caprice of public favour has returned them to the place whence they came.

The letters of Pope were unquestionably written for the public eye. Partly accident, and partly persevering ingenuity, extracted from the family chests the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who long remained the model of letter-writing. The letters of Hughes and Shenstone, of Gray, Cowper, Walpole, and others, self-painters, whose indelible colours have given an imperishable charm to these fragments of the human mind, may close our subject; printed familiar letters now enter into the history of our literature.

AN INQUIRY

INTO THE

LITERARY AND POLITICAL CHARACTER OF JAMES THE FIRST;

INCLUDING A SKETCH OF HIS AGE.

"THE whole reign of James I. has been represented by a late celebrated pen (Burnet) to have been a continued course of mean practices; and others, who have professedly given an account of it, have filled their works with *libel* and *invective*, instead of *history*. Both King James and his ministers have met with a treatment from posterity highly unworthy of them, and those who have so liberally bestowed their censures were entirely ignorant of the true springs and causes of the actions they have undertaken to represent."—SAWYER'S Preface to "Winwood's Memorials."

"Il y auroit un excellent livre à faire sur les INJUSTICES, les OUBLIS, et les CALOMNIES HISTORIQUES."—MADAME DE GENLIS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE present inquiry originates in an affair of literary conscience. Many years ago I set off in the world with the popular notions of the character of James the First; but in the course of study, and with a more enlarged comprehension of the age, I was frequently struck by the contrast of his real with his apparent character; and I thought I had developed those hidden and involved causes which have so long influenced modern writers in ridiculing and vilifying this monarch.

This historical trifle is, therefore, neither a hasty decision, nor a designed inquiry; the results gradually arose through successive periods of time, and, were it worth the while, the history of my thoughts, in my own publications, might be arranged in a sort of chronological conviction.*

It would be a cowardly silence to shrink from encountering all that popular prejudice and party feeling may oppose; this were incompatible with that constant search after truth which we may at least expect from the retired student.

I had originally limited this inquiry to the *literary* character of the monarch; but there was a secret connexion between that and his political conduct; and that again led me to examine the manners and temper of the times, with the effects which a peace of more than twenty years operated on the nation. I hope that the freshness of the materials, often drawn from contemporary writings

* I have described the progress of my opinions in "Curiosities of Literature," vol. i., p. 467, last edition.

which have never been published, may in some respect gratify curiosity. Of the *political* character of James the First opposite tempers will form opposite opinions; the friends of peace and humanity will consider that the greatest happiness of the people is that of possessing a philosopher on the throne; let profounder inquirers hereafter discover why those princes are suspected of being but weak men, who are the true fathers of their people; let them too inform us, whether we are to ascribe to James the First, as well as to Marcus Antoninus, the disorders of their reign, or place them to the ingratitude and wantonness of mankind.

AN INQUIRY

INTO THE

LITERARY AND POLITICAL CHARACTER OF JAMES THE FIRST;

INCLUDING A SKETCH OF HIS AGE.

If sometimes the learned entertain false opinions and traditionary prejudices, as well as the people, they however preserve among themselves a paramount love of truth, and the means to remove errors, which have escaped their scrutiny. The occasion of such errors may be complicate, but, usually, it is the arts and passions of the few which find an indolent acquiescence among the many, and firm adherents among those who so eagerly consent to what they do not dislike to hear.

A remarkable instance of this appears in the character of James the First, which lies buried under a heap of ridicule and obloquy; yet James the First was a literary monarch at one of the great eras of English literature, and his contemporaries were far from suspecting that his talents were inconsiderable, even among those who had their reasons not to like him. The degradation which his literary character has suffered has been inflicted by more recent hands; and it may startle the last echoer of Pope's "Pedant-reign" to hear that more wit and wisdom have been recorded of James the First than of any one of our sovereigns.

An "Author-Sovereign," as Lord Shaftesbury, in his anomalous but emphatic style, terms this class of writers, is placed between a double eminence of honours, and must incur the double perils; he will receive no favour from his brothers, the *Fainéants*, as a whole race of ciphers in succession on the throne of France were denominated, and who find it much more easy to despise than to acquire; while his other brothers, the republicans of literature, want a heart to admire the man who has resisted the perpetual seductions of a court-life for the silent labours of his closet. Yet if Alphonsus of Arragon be still a name endeared to us for his love of literature, and for that elegant testimony of his devotion to study expressed by the device on his banner of *an open book*, how much more ought we to be indulgent to the memory of a sovereign who has written one still worthy of being opened?

We must separate the literary from the political character of this monarch, and the qualities of his mind and temper from the ungracious and neglected manners of his personal one. And if we do not take a more familiar view of the events, the parties, and the genius of the times, the views and conduct of James the First will still remain imperfectly comprehended. In the reign of a prince who was no military character, we must busy ourselves at home; the events he regulated may be numerous and even interesting, although not those which make so much noise and show in the popular page of history, and escape us in its general views. The want of this sort of knowledge has proved to be one great source of the false judgments passed on this monarch. Surely it is not philosophical to decide of another age by the changes and the feelings through which our own has passed. There is a chronology of human opinions which, not observing, an indiscreet philosopher may commit an anachronism in reasoning.

When the Stuarts became the objects of popular indignation, a peculiar race of libels was eagerly dragged into light, assuming the imposing form of history; many of these state-libels did not even pass through the press, and may occasionally be discovered in their MS. state. Yet these publications cast no shade on the *talents* of James the First. His literary attainments were yet undisputed; they were echoing in the ear of the writers, and many proofs of his sagacity were still lively in their recollections.

THE FIRST MODERN ASSAILANTS OF THE CHARACTER OF JAMES THE FIRST.

Burnet, the ardent champion of a party so deeply concerned to oppose as well the persons as the principles of the Stuarts, levelled the father of the race; we read with delight pages which warm and hurry us on, mingling truths with rumours, and known with suggested events, with all the spirit of secret history. But the character of James I. was to pass through the lengthened inquisitorial tortures of the sullen sectarianism of Harris.* It

* The historical works of Dr. William Harris have been recently republished in a collected form, and they may now be considered as entering into our historical stores.

Harris is a curious researcher; but what appears more striking in his historical character, is the impartiality with which he quotes authorities which make against his own opinions and statements. Yet is Harris a writer likely to impose on many readers. He announces in his title-pages that his works are "after the manner of Mr. Bayle." This is but a literary imposition, for Harris is perhaps the meanest writer in our language both for style and philosophical thinking. The extraordinary impartiality he displays in his faithful quotations from writers on opposite sides is only the more likely to deceive us; for by that unalterable party feeling, which never forsakes him, the facts against him he studiously weakens by doubts, surmises, and suggestions; a character sinks to the level of his notions by a single

was branded by the fierce, remorseless republican, Catharine Macaulay, and flouted by the light, sparkling Whig, Horace Walpole.* A senseless cry of pedantry

stroke; and from the arguments adverse to his purpose, he wrests the most violent inferences. All party writers must submit to practise such mean and disingenuous arts if they affect to disguise themselves under a cover of impartiality. Bayle, intent on collecting facts, was indifferent to their results; but Harris is more intent on the deductions than the facts. The truth is, Harris wrote to please his patron, the republican Hollis, who supplied him with books, and every friendly aid. "It is possible for an ingenious man to be of a *party* without being *partial*," says Rushworth; an airy clench on the lips of a sober matter-of-fact man looks suspicious, and betrays the weak pang of a half-conscience.

* Horace Walpole's character of James I., in his "Royal Authors," is as remarkable as his character of Sir Philip Sidney; he might have written both without any acquaintance with the works he has so maliciously criticised. In his account of Sidney he had silently passed over the "Defence of Poetry;" and in his second edition he makes this insolent avowal, that "he had forgotten it; a proof that I at least did not think it sufficient foundation for so high a character as he acquired." Every reader of taste knows the falseness of the criticism, and how heartless the polished cynicism that could dare it. I repeat, what I have elsewhere said, that Horace Walpole had something in his composition more predominant than his wit, a cold, unfeeling disposition, which contemned all literary men, at the moment his heart secretly panted to partake of their fame.

Nothing can be more imposing than his volatile and caustic criticisms on the works of James I.; yet it appears to me that he had never opened that folio volume he so poignantly ridicules. For he doubts whether these two pieces, "The Prince's Cabala" and "The Duty of a King in his Royal Office," were genuine productions of James I. The truth is, they are both nothing more than extracts printed with those separate titles, drawn from the King's "Basilicon Doron." He had probably neither read the extracts nor the original. Thus singularity of opinion, vivacity of ridicule, and polished epigrams in prose, were the means by which this noble writer startled the world by his paradoxes, and at length lived to be mortified at a reputation which he sported with and lost. I refer the reader to those extracts from his MS. letters which are in "Calamities of Authors," where he has made his literary confessions, and performs his act of penance.

had been raised against him by the eloquent invective of Bolingbroke, from whom doubtless Pope echoed it in verse which has outlived his lordship's prose:—

> Oh, cried the goddess, for some pedant reign!
> Some gentle James to bless the land again;
> To stick the doctor's chair into the throne,
> Give law to words, or war with words alone,
> Senates and courts with Greek and Latin rule,
> And turn the council to a grammar-school!
>
> *Dunciad*, book iv. ver. 175

THE PEDANTRY OF JAMES THE FIRST.

Few of my readers, I suspect, but have long been persuaded that James I. was a mere college pedant, and that all his works, whatever they may be, are monstrous pedantic labours. Yet this monarch of all things detested pedantry, either as it shows itself in the mere form of Greek and Latin, or in ostentatious book-learning, or in the affectation of words of remote signification: these are the only points of view in which I have been taught to consider the meaning of the term pedantry, which is very indefinite, and always a relative one.

The age of James I. was a controversial age, of unsettled opinions and contested principles; an age, in which authority was considered as stronger than opinion; but the vigour of that age of genius was infused into their writings, and those citers, who thus perpetually crowded their margins, were profound and original thinkers. When the learning of a preceding age becomes less recondite, and those principles general which were at first peculiar, are the ungrateful heirs of all this knowledge to reproach the fathers of their literature with pedantry? Lord Bolingbroke has pointedly said of James I. that "his pedantry was too much even for

the age in which he lived." His lordship knew little of that glorious age when the founders of our literature flourished. It had been over-clouded by the French court of Charles II., a race of unprincipled wits, and the revolution-court of William, heated by a new faction, too impatient to discuss those principles of government which they had established. It was easy to ridicule what they did not always understand, and very rarely met with. But men of far higher genius than this monarch, Selden, Usher, and Milton, must first be condemned before this odium of pedantry can attach itself to the plain and unostentatious writings of James I., who, it is remarkable, has not scattered in them those oratorical periods, and elaborate fancies, which he indulged in his speeches and proclamations. These loud accusers of the pedantry of James were little aware that the king has expressed himself with energy and distinctness on this very topic. His majesty cautions Prince Henry against the use of any "corrupt leide, as *book-language*, and *pen-and-inkhorn termes*, and, least of all, nignard and effeminate ones." One passage may be given entire as completely refuting a charge so general, yet so unfounded. "I would also advise you to write in "*your own language*, for there is *nothing left to be said in Greek and Latine already;* and, ynewe (enough) of poore schollers would match you in these languages; and besides that it best becometh a *King*, to purifie and make famous *his owne tongue;* therein he may goe before all his subjects, as it setteth him well to doe in all honest and lawful things." No scholar of a pedantic taste could have dared so complete an emancipation from ancient, yet not obsolete prejudices, at a time when many of our own great authors yet imagined there was no fame for an Englishman unless he neglected his maternal language for the artificial labour of the idiom of ancient Rome. Bacon had even his own domestic Essays translated into Latin; and

the king found a courtier-bishop to perform the same task for his majesty's writings. There was something prescient in this view of the national language, by the king, who contemplated in it those latent powers which had not yet burst into existence. It is evident that the line of Pope is false which describes the king as intending to rule "senates and courts" by "turning the council to a grammar-school."

HIS POLEMICAL STUDIES.

This censure of the pedantry of James is also connected with those studies of polemical divinity, for which the king has incurred much ridicule from one party, who were not his contemporaries; and such vehement invective from another, who were; who, to their utter dismay, discovered their monarch descending into their theological gymnasium to encounter them with their own weapons.

The affairs of religion and politics in the reign of James I., as in the preceding one of Elizabeth,* were identified together; nor yet have the same causes in Europe ceased to act, however changed or modified. The government of James was imperfectly established while his subjects were wrestling with two great factions to obtain the predominance. The Catholics were disputing his title to the crown, which they aimed to carry into the family of Spain, and had even fixed on Arabella Stuart, to marry her to a Prince of Parma; and the

* I have more largely entered into the history of the party who attempted to subvert the government in the reign of Elizabeth, and who published their works under the assumed name of Martin Mar-prelate, than had hitherto been done. In our domestic annals that event and those personages are of some importance and curiosity; but were imperfectly known to the popular writers of our history.—See "Quarrels of Authors," p. 296, *et seq*.

Puritans would have abolished even sovereignty itself; these parties indeed were not able to take the field, but all felt equally powerful with the pen. Hence an age of doctrines. When a religious body has grown into power, it changes itself into a political one; the chiefs are flattered by their strength and stimulated by their ambition; but a powerful body in the State cannot remain stationary, and a divided empire it disdains. Religious controversies have therefore been usually coverings to mask the political designs of the heads of parties.

We smile at James the First threatening the States-general by the English Ambassador about Vorstius, a Dutch professor, who had espoused the doctrines of Arminius, and had also vented some metaphysical notions of his own respecting the occult nature of the Divinity. He was the head of the Remonstrants, who were at open war with the party called the Contra-Remonstrants. The ostensible subjects were religious doctrines, but the concealed one was a struggle between Pensionary Barnevelt, aided by the French interest, and the Prince of Orange, supported by the English; even to our own days the same opposite interests existed, and betrayed the Republic, although religious doctrines had ceased to be the pretext.*

* Pensionary Barnevelt, in his seventy-second year, was at length brought to the block. Diodati, a divine of Geneva, made a miserable pun on the occasion; he said that "the *Canons* of the Synod of Dort had taken off the head of the advocate of Holland." This pun, says Brandt in his curious "History of the Reformation," is very injurious to the Synod, since it intimates that the Church loves blood. It never entered into the mind of these divines that Barnevelt fell, not by the Synod, but by the Orange and English party prevailing against the French. Lord Hardwicke, a statesman and a man of letters, deeply conversant with secret and public history, is a more able judge than the ecclesiastical historian or the Swiss divine, who could see nothing in the Synod of Dort but what appeared in it. It is in Lord Hardwicke's preface to Sir Dudley Carleton's "Letters" that his lordship has made this important discovery.

What was passing between the Dutch Prince and the Dutch Pensionary, was much like what was taking place between the King of England and his own subjects. James I. had to touch with a balancing hand the Catholics and the Nonconformists,*—to play them one against another; but there was a distinct end in their views. "James I.," says Burnet, "continued always writing and talking against Popery, but acting for it." The King and the bishops were probably more tolerant to monarchists and prelatists, than to republicans and presbyters. When James got nothing but gunpowder and Jesuits from Rome, he was willing enough to banish, or suppress, but the Catholic families were ancient and numerous; and the most determined spirits which ever subverted a government were Catholic.† Yet what could the King

* James did all he could to weaken the Catholic party by dividing them in opinion. When Dr. Reynolds, the head of the Nonconformists, complained to the king of the printing and dispersing of Popish pamphlets, the king answered that this was done by a warrant from the Court, to nourish the schism between the Seculars and Jesuits, which was of great service. "Doctor," added the king, "you are a better clergyman than statesman."—Neale's "History of the Puritans," vol. i., p. 416, 4to.

† The character and demeanour of the celebrated Guy or Guido Fawkes, who appeared first before the council under the assumed name of Johnson, I find in a MS. letter of the times, which contains some characteristic touches not hitherto published. This letter is from Sir Edward Hoby to Sir Thomas Edmondes, our ambassador at the court of Brussels—dated 19th Nov., 1605. "One Johnson was found in the vault where the Gunpower Plot was discovered. He was asked if he was sorry? He answered that he was only sorry it had not taken place. He was threatened that he should die a worse death than he that killed the Prince of Orange; he answered, that he could bear it as well. When Johnson was brought to the king's presence, the king asked him how he could conspire so hideous a treason against his children and so many innocent souls who had never offended him? He answered, that dangerous diseases required a desperate remedy; and he told some of the Scots that his intent was to have blown them back again into Scotland!"—Mordacious Guy Fawkes!

expect from the party of the Puritans, and their "conceited parity," as he called it, should he once throw himself into their hands, but the fate his son received from them?

In the early stage of the Reformation, the Catholic still entered into the same church with the Reformed; this common union was broken by the impolitical impatience of the court of Rome, who, jealous of the tranquillity of Elizabeth, hoped to weaken her government by disunion;* but the Reformed were already separating among themselves by a new race, who, fancying that their religion was still too Catholic, were for reforming the Reformation. These had most extravagant fancies, and were for modelling the government according to each particular man's notion. Were we to bend to the foreign despotism of the Roman Tiara, or that of the republican rabble of the Presbytery of Geneva?

POLEMICAL STUDIES WERE POLITICAL.

It was in these times that James I., a learned prince, applied to polemical studies; properly understood, these were in fact political ones. Lord Bolingbroke says, "He affected more learning than became a king, which he broached on every occasion in such a manner as would

* Sir Edward Coke, attorney-general, in the trial of Garnet the Jesuit, says, "There were no Recusants in England—all came to church howsoever Popishly inclined, till the Bull of Pius V. excommunicated and deposed Elizabeth. On this the Papists refused to join in the public service.—"State Trials," vol. i., p. 242.

The Pope imagined, by false impressions he had received, that the Catholic party was strong enough to prevail against Elizabeth. Afterwards, when he found his error, a dispensation was granted by himself and his successor, that all Catholics might show outward obedience to Elizabeth till a happier opportunity. Such are Catholic politics and Catholic faith!

have misbecome a schoolmaster." Would the politician then require a half-learned king, or a king without any learning at all? Our eloquent sophist appears not to have recollected that polemical studies had long with us been considered as royal ones; and that from a slender volume of the sort our sovereigns still derive the regal distinction of "Defenders of the Faith." The pacific government of James I. required that the king himself should be a master of these controversies to be enabled to balance the conflicting parties; and none but a learned king could have exerted the industry or attained to the skill.

THE HAMPTON-COURT CONFERENCE.

In the famous conference at Hampton Court, which the King held with the heads of the Nonconformists, we see his majesty conversing sometimes with great learning and sense, but oftener more with the earnestness of a man, than some have imagined comported with the dignity of a crowned head. The truth is, James, like a true student, indulged, even to his dress, an utter carelessness of parade, and there was in his character a constitutional warmth of heart and a jocundity of temper which did not always adapt it to state-occasions; he threw out his feelings, and sometimes his jests. James, who had passed his youth in a royal bondage, felt that these Nonconformists, while they were debating small points, were reserving for hereafter their great ones; were cloaking their republicanism by their theology, and, like all other politicians, that their ostensible were not their real motives.* Harris and Neal, the organs of the

* In political history we usually find that the heads of a party are much wiser than the party themselves, so that, whatever they intend

Nonconformists, inveigh against James; even Hume, with the philosophy of the eighteenth century, has pronounced that the king was censurable "for entering zealously into these frivolous disputes of theology." Lord Bolingbroke declares that the king held this conference "in haste to show his parts." Thus a man of genius substitutes suggestion and assertion for accuracy of knowledge. In the present instance, it was an attempt of the Puritans to try the king on his arrival in England; they presented a petition for a conference, called "The Millenary Petition,"* from a thousand persons supposed to have signed it; the king would not refuse it; but so far from being "in haste to show his parts," that when he discovered their pretended grievances were so futile, "he complained that he had been troubled with such

to acquire, their first demands are small; but the honest souls who are only stirred by their own innocent zeal, are sure to complain that their business is done negligently. Should the party at first succeed, then the bolder spirit, which they have disguised or suppressed through policy, is left to itself; it starts unbridled and at full gallop. All this occurred in the case of the Puritans. We find that some of the rigid Nonconformists did confess in a pamphlet, "The Christian's modest offer of the Silenced Ministers," 1606, that those who were appointed to speak for them at Hampton Court were *not of their nomination or judgment;* they insisted that these delegates should declare at once against the whole church establishment, &c., and model the government to each particular man's notions! But these delegates prudently refused to acquaint the king with the conflicting opinions of their constituents.—*Lansdowne MSS.* 1056, 51.

This confession of the Nonconformists is also acknowledged by their historian Neale, vol. ii., p. 419, 4to edit.

* The petition is given at length in Collier's "Eccles. Hist.," vol. ii. p. 672. At this time also the Lay Catholics of England printed at Douay, "A Petition Apologetical," to James I. Their language is remarkable: they complained they were excluded "that supreme court of parliament first founded by and for Catholike men, was furnished with Catholike prelates, peeres, and personages; and so continued till the times of *Edward VI.* a *childe*, and Queen Elizabeth a *woman*."— Dodd's "Church History."

importunities, when some more private course might have been taken for their satisfaction."

The narrative of this once celebrated conference, notwithstanding the absurdity of the topics, becomes in the hands of the entertaining Fuller a picturesque and dramatic composition, where the dialogue and the manners of the speakers are after the life.

In the course of this conference we obtain a familiar intercourse with the king; we may admire the capacity of the monarch whose genius was versatile with the subjects; sliding from theme to theme with the ease which only mature studies could obtain; entering into the graver parts of these discussions; discovering a ready knowledge of biblical learning, which would sometimes throw itself out with his natural humour, in apt and familiar illustrations, throughout indulging his own personal feelings with an unparalleled *naïveté*.

The king opened the conference with dignity; he said "he was happier than his predecessors, who had to alter what they found established, but he only to confirm what was well settled." One of the party made a notable discovery, that the surplice was a kind of garment used by the priests of Isis. The king observed that he had no notion of this antiquity, since he had always heard from them that it was "a rag of popery." "Dr. Reynolds," said the king, with an air of pleasantry, "they used to wear hose and shoes in times of popery; have you therefore a mind to go barefoot?" Reynolds objected to the words used in matrimony, "with my body I thee worship." The king said the phrase was an usual English term, as a *gentleman of worship*, &c., and turning to the doctor, smiling, said, "Many a man speaks of Robin Hood, who never shot in his bow; if you had a good wife yourself, you would think all the honour and worship you could do to her were well bestowed." Reynolds was not satisfied

on the 37th article, declaring that "the Bishop of Rome hath no authority in this land," and desired it should be added, "nor ought to have any." In Barlow's narrative we find that on this his majesty heartily laughed—a laugh easily caught up by the lords; but the king nevertheless condescended to reply sensibly to the weak objection.

"What speak you of the pope's authority here? *Habemus jure quod habemus;* and therefore inasmuch as it is said he hath not, it is plain enough that he ought not to have." It was on this occasion that some "pleasant discourse passed," in which "a Puritan" was defined to be a "Protestant frightened out of his wits." The king is more particularly vivacious when he alludes to the occurrences of his own reign, or suspects the Puritans of republican notions. On one occasion, to cut the gordian-knot, the king royally decided—"I will not argue that point with you, but answer as kings in parliament, *Le Roy s'avisera.*"

When they hinted at a Scottish Presbytery the king was somewhat stirred, yet what is admirable in him (says Barlow) without a show of passion. The king had lived among the republican saints, and had been, as he said, "A king without state, without honour, without order, where beardless boys would brave us to our face; and, like the Saviour of the world, though he lived among them, he was not of them." On this occasion, although the king may not have "shown his passion," he broke out, however, with a *naïve* effusion, remarkable for painting after the home-life a republican government. It must have struck Hume forcibly, for he has preserved part of it in the body of his history. Hume only consulted Fuller. I give the copious explosion from Barlow:—

"If you aim at a Scottish Presbytery, it agreeth as well with monarchy as God and the devil. Then Jack, and Tom, Will, and Dick, shall meet, and at their pleas-

ure censure me and my council, and all our proceedings; then Will shall stand up and say, It must be thus; then Dick shall reply, Nay, marry, but we will have it thus. And therefore here I must once more reiterate my former speech, *Le Roy s'avisera.* Stay, I pray you, for one seven years before you demand that of me, and if then you find me pursy and fat, I may hearken to you; for let that government once be up, I am sure I shall be kept in breath; then shall we all of us have work enough: but, Dr. Reynolds, till you find that I grow lazy, let that alone."

The king added,

"I will tell you a tale:—Knox flattered the queen-regent of Scotland that she was supreme head of all the church, if she suppressed the popish prelates. But how long, trow ye, did this continue? Even so long, till, by her authority, the popish bishops were repressed, and he himself, and his adherents, were brought in and well settled. Then, lo! they began to make small account of her authority, and took the cause into their own hands."

This was a pointed political tale, appropriately told in the person of a monarch.

The king was never deficient in the force and quickness of his arguments. Even Neale, the great historian of the Puritans, complaining that Dean Barlow has cut off some of the king's speeches, is reluctantly compelled to tax himself with a high commendation of the monarch, who, he acknowledges, on one of the days of this conference, spoke against the corruptions of the church, and the practices of the prelates, insomuch that Dr. Andrews, then dean of the chapel, said that his majesty did that day wonderfully play the Puritan.* The king, indeed,

* The bishops of James I. were, as Fuller calls one of them, "potent courtiers," and too worldly-minded men. Bancroft was a man of vehement zeal, but of the most grasping avarice, as appears by an epigrammatic epitaph on his death in Arthur Wilson—

was seriously inclined to an union of parties. More than once he silenced the angry tongue of Bancroft, and tempered the zeal of others; and even commended when he could Dr. Reynolds, the chief of the Puritans; the king consented to the only two important articles that side suggested; a new catechism adapted to the people—"Let the weak be informed and the wilful be punished," said the king; and that new translation of the Bible which forms our present version. "But," added the king, "it must be without marginal notes, for the Geneva Bible is the worst for them, full of seditious conceits; Asa is censured for *only deposing* his mother for idolatry, and not *killing* her." Thus early the dark spirit of Machiavel had lighted on that of the ruthless Calvin. The grievances of our first dissenters were futile—their innovations interminable; and we discover the king's notions, at the close of a proclamation, issued after this

"Here lies his grace, in cold earth clad,
Who died with want of what he had."

We find a characteristic trait of this Bishop of London in this conference. When Ellesmere, Lord Chancellor, observed that "livings rather want learned men, than learned men livings, many in the universities pining for want of places. I wish, therefore, some may have *single coats* (one living), before others have *doublets* (pluralities), and this method I have observed in bestowing the king's benefices." Bancroft replied, "I commend your memorable *care* that way; but a *doublet* is necessary in cold weather." Thus an avaricious bishop could turn off, with a miserable jest, the open avowal of his love of pluralities. Another, Neile, Bishop of Lincoln, when any one preached who was remarkable for his piety, desirous of withdrawing the king's attention from truths he did not wish to have his majesty reminded of, would in the sermon-time entertain the king with a merry tale, which the king would laugh at, and tell those near him, that he could not hear the preacher for the old — bishop; prefixing an epithet explicit of the character of these merry tales. Kennet has preserved for us the "rank relation," as he calls it; not, he adds, but "we have had divers hammerings and conflicts within us to leave it out."—Kennet's "History of England," ii. 729.

conference: "Such is the desultory levity of some people, that they are always languishing after change and novelty, insomuch that were they humoured in their inconstancy, they would expose the public management, and make the administration ridiculous." Such is the vigorous style of James the First in his proclamations; and such is the political truth, which will not die away with the conference at Hampton Court.

These studies of polemical divinity, like those of the ancient scholastics, were not to be obtained without a robust intellectual exercise. James instructed his son Charles,* who excelled in them; and to those studies

* That the clergy were somewhat jealous of their sovereign's interference in these matters may be traced. When James charged the chaplains, who were to wait on the prince in Spain, to decline, as far as possible, religious disputes, he added, that "should any happen, my son is able to moderate in them." The king, observing one of the divines smile, grew warm, vehemently affirming, "I tell ye, Charles shall manage a point in controversy with the best studied divine of ye all." What the king said was afterwards confirmed on an extraordinary occasion, in the conference Charles I. held with Alexander Henderson, the old champion of the kirk. Deprived of books, which might furnish the sword and pistol of controversy, and without a chaplain to stand by him as a second, Charles I. fought the theological duel; and the old man, cast down, retired with such a sense of the learning and honour of the king, in maintaining the order of episcopacy in England, that his death, which soon followed, is attributed to the deep vexation of this discomfiture. The veteran, who had succeeded in subverting the hierarchy in Scotland, would not be apt to die of a fit of conversion; but vexation might be apoplectic in an old and sturdy disputant. The king's controversy was published; and nearly all the writers agree he carried the day. Yet some divines appear more jealous than grateful; Bishop Kennet, touched by the *esprit du corps*, honestly tells us, that "some thought the king had been better able to *protect* the Church, if he had not *disputed* for it." This discovers all the ardour possible for the *establishment*, and we are to infer that an English sovereign is only to *fight* for his churchmen. But there is a nobler office for a sovereign to perform in ecclesiastical history—to promote the learned and the excellent, and repress the dissolute and the intolerant.

Whitelocke attributes that aptitude of Charles I. which made him so skilful a summer-up of arguments, and endowed him with so clear a perception in giving his decisions.

THE WORKS OF JAMES THE FIRST.

We now turn to the writings of James the First. He composed a treatise on demoniacs and witches; those dramatic personages in courts of law. James and his council never suspected that those ancient foes to mankind could be dismissed by a simple *Nolle prosequi.* "A Commentary on the Revelations," which was a favourite speculation then, and on which greater geniuses have written since his day. "A Counterblast to Tobacco!" the title more ludicrous than the design.* His majesty

* Not long before James composed his treatise on "Dæmonologie," the learned Wierus had published an elaborate work on the subject. "*De præstigiis Dæmonum et incantationibus et Veneficiis,*" &c., 1568. He advanced one step in philosophy by discovering that many of the supposed cases of incantation originated in the imagination of these sorcerers—but he advanced no farther, for he acknowledges the real diabolical presence. The physician who pretended to cure the disease, was himself irrecoverably infected. Yet even this single step of Wierus was strenuously resisted by the learned Bodin, who, in his amusing volume of "Demonomanie des Sorciers," 1593, refutes Wierus. These are the leading authors of the times; who were followed by a crowd. Thus James I. neither wanted authorities to quote nor great minds to sanction his "Dæmonologie," first published in 1597. To the honour of England, a single individual, Reginald Scot, with a genius far advanced beyond his age, denied the very existence of those witches and demons, in the curious volume of his "Discovery of Witchcraft," 1584. His books were burned! and the author was himself not quite out of danger; and Voetius, says Bayle, complains that when the work was translated into Dutch, it raised up a number of libertines who laughed at all the operations and the apparitions of devils. Casaubon and Glanvil, who wrote so much later, treat Scot with profound contempt, assuring us his reasonings are childish, and his philosophy absurd! Such was the reward of a man of genius com-

terrified "the tobacconists," as the patriarchs of smoking-clubs were called, and who were selling their very lands and houses in an epidemical madness for "a stinking weed," by discovering that "they were making a sooty kitchen in their inward parts." * And the king gained a point with the great majority of his subjects, when he demonstrated to their satisfaction that the pope was anti-christ. Ridiculous as these topics are to us, the works themselves were formed on what modern philosophers affect to term the principle of utility; a principle which, with them indeed, includes everything they approve of, and nothing they dislike.

It was a prompt honesty of intention to benefit his people, which seems to have been the urgent motive that induced this monarch to become an author, more than any literary ambition; for he writes on no prepared or permanent topic, and even published anonymously, and as he once wrote "post-haste," what he composed or designed for practical and immediate use; and even in

bating with popular prejudices! Even so late as 1687, these popular superstitions were confirmed by the narrations and the philosophy of Glanvil, Dr. More, &c. The subject enters into the "Commentaries on the Laws of England." An edict of Louis XIV. and a statute by George II. made an end of the whole *Diablerie*. Had James I. adopted the system of Reginald Scot, the king had probably been branded as an atheist king!

* Harris, with systematic ingenuity against James I., after abusing this tract as a wretched performance, though himself probably had written a meaner one—quotes the curious information the king gives of the enormous abuse to which the practice of smoking was carried, expressing his astonishment at it. Yet, that James may not escape bitter censure, he abuses the king for levying a heavy tax on it to prevent this ruinous consumption, and his silly policy in discouraging such a branch of our revenues, and an article so valuable to our plantations, &c. As if James I. could possibly incur censure for the discoveries of two centuries after, of the nature of this plant! James saw great families ruined by the epidemic madness, and sacrificed the revenues which his crown might derive from it, to assist its suppression. This was patriotism in the monarch.

that admirable treatise on the duties of a sovereign, which he addressed to Prince Henry, a great portion is directed to the exigencies of the times, the parties, and the circumstances of his own court. Of the works now more particularly noticed, their interest has ceased with the melancholy follies which at length have passed away; although the philosophical inquirer will not choose to drop this chapter in the history of mankind. But one fact in favour of our royal author is testified by the honest Fuller and the cynical Osborne. On the king's arrival in England, having discovered the numerous impostures and illusions which he had often referred to as authorities, he grew suspicious of the whole system of "Dæmonologie," and at length recanted it entirely. With the same conscientious zeal James had written the book, the king condemned it; and the sovereign separated himself from the author, in the cause of truth; but the clergy and the parliament persisted in making the imaginary crime felony by the statute, and it is only a recent act of parliament which has forbidden the appearance of the possessed and the spae-wife.

But this apology for having written these treatises need not rest on this fact, however honourably it appeals to our candour. Let us place it on higher ground, and tell those who asperse this monarch for his credulity and intellectual weakness, that they themselves, had they lived in the reign of James I., had probably written on the same topics, and felt as uneasy at the rumour of a witch being a resident in their neighbourhood!

POPULAR SUPERSTITIONS OF THE AGE.

This and the succeeding age were the times of omens and meteors, prognostics and providences—of "dæv-fa-

tality," or the superstition of fortunate and unfortunate days, and the combined powers of astrology and magic. It was only at the close of the century of James I. that Bayle wrote a treatise on comets, to prove that they had no influence in the cabinets of princes; this was, however, done with all the precaution imaginable. The greatest minds were then sinking under such popular superstitions: and whoever has read much of the private history of this age will have smiled at their ludicrous terrors and bewildered reasonings. The most ordinary events were attributed to an interposition of Providence. In the unpublished memoirs of that learned antiquary, Sir Symonds D'Ewes, such frequently occur. When a comet appeared, and D'Ewes, for exercise at college, had been ringing the great bell, and entangled himself in the rope, which had nearly strangled him, he resolves not to ring while the comet is in the heavens. When a fire happened at the Six Clerks' Office, of whom his father was one, he inquires into the most prominent sins of the six clerks: these were the love of the world, and doing business on Sundays: and it seems they thought so themselves; for after the fire the office-door was fast closed on the Sabbath. When the Thames had an unusual ebb and flow, it was observed, that it had never happened in their recollection, but just before the rising of the Earl of Essex in Elizabeth's reign,—and Sir Symonds became uneasy at the political aspect of affairs.

All the historians of these times are very particular in marking the bearded beams of blazing stars; and the first public event that occurs is always connected with the radiant course. Arthur Wilson describes one which preceded the death of the simple queen of James I. It was generally imagined that "this great light in the heaven was sent as a flambeaux to her funeral;" but the historian discovers, while "this blaze was burning, the fire of war broke out in Bohemia." It was found difficult

to decide between the two opinions; and Rushworth, who wrote long afterwards, carefully chronicles both.

The truth is, the greatest geniuses of the age of James I. were as deeply concerned in these investigations as his Majesty. Had the great Verulam emancipated himself from all the dreams of his age? He speaks indeed cautiously of witchcraft, but does not deny its occult agency; and of astrology he is rather for the improvement than the rejection. The bold spirit of Rawleigh contended with the superstitions of the times; but how feeble is the contest where we fear to strike! Even Rawleigh is prodigal of his praise to James for the king's chapter on magic. The great mind of Rawleigh perceived how much men are formed and changed by *education;* but, were this principle admitted to its extent, the *stars* would lose their influence! In pleading for the free agency of man, he would escape from the pernicious tendency of predestination, or the astral influence, which yet he allows. To extricate himself from the dilemma, he invents an analogical reasoning of a royal power of dispensing with the laws in extreme cases; so that, though he does not deny "the binding of the stars," he declares they are controllable by the will of the Creator. In this manner, fettered by prevalent opinions, he satisfies the superstitions of an astrological age, and the penetration of his own genius. At a much later period Dr. Henry More, a writer of genius, confirmed the ghost and demon creed, by a number of facts, as marvellously pleasant as any his own poetical fancy could have invented. Other great authors have not less distinguished themselves. When has there appeared a single genius who at once could free himself of the traditional prejudices of his contemporaries—nay, of his own party? Genius, in its advancement beyond the intelligence of its own age, is but progressive; it is fancifully said to soar, but it only climbs. Yet the minds of

some authors of this age are often discovered to be superior to their work; because the mind is impelled by its own inherent powers, but the work usually originates in the age. James I. once acutely observed, how "the author may be wise, but the work foolish."

Thus minds of a higher rank than our royal author had not yet cleared themselves out of these clouds of popular prejudices. We now proceed to more decisive results of the superior capacity of this much ill-used monarch.

THE HABITS OF JAMES THE FIRST THOSE OF A MAN OF LETTERS.

The habits of life of this monarch were those of a man of letters. His first studies were soothed by none of their enticements. If James loved literature, it was for itself; for Buchanan did not tinge the rim of the vase with honey; and the bitterness was tasted not only in the draught, but also in the rod. In some princes, the harsh discipline James passed through has raised a strong aversion against literature. The Dauphin, for whose use was formed the well-known edition of the classics, looked on the volumes with no eye of love. To free himself of his tutor, Huet, he eagerly consented to an early marriage. "Now we shall see if Mr. Huet shall any more keep me to ancient geography!" exclaimed the Dauphin, rejoicing in the first act of despotism. This ingenuous sally, it is said, too deeply affected that learned man for many years afterwards. Huet's zealous gentleness (for how could Huet be too rigid?) wanted the art which Buchanan disdained to practise. But, in the case of the prince of Scotland, a constitutional timidity combining with an ardour for study, and therefore a veneration for his tutor, produced a more remarkable effect. Such was the terror which the remembrance of this illustrious but

inexorable republican left on the imagination of his royal pupil, that even so late as when James was seated on the English throne, once the appearance of his frowning tutor in a dream greatly agitated the king, who in vain attempted to pacify him in this portentous vision. This extraordinary fact may be found in a manuscript letter of that day.*

James, even by the confession of his bitter satirist, Francis Osborne, "dedicated rainy weather to his standish, and fair to his hounds." His life had the uniformity of a student's; but the regulated life of a learned monarch must have weighed down the gay and dissipated with the deadliest monotony. Hence one of these courtiers declared that, if he were to awake after a sleep of seven years' continuance, he would undertake to

* The learned Mede wrote the present letter soon after another, which had not been acknowledged, to his friend Sir M. Stuteville; and the writer is uneasy lest the political secrets of the day might bring the parties into trouble. It seems he was desirous that letter should be read and then burnt.

"*March* 31, 1622.

"I hope my letter miscarried not; if it did I am in a sweet pickle I desired to hear from you of the receipt and extinction of it. Though there is no danger in my letters whilst report is so rife, yet when it is forgotten they will not be so safe; but your danger is as great as mine—

"Mr. Downham was with me, now come from London. He told me that it was three years ago since those verses were delivered to the king in a dream, by his Master Buchanan, who seemed to *check him severely, as he used to do;* and his Majesty, in his dream, seemed desirous to pacify him, but he, *turning away with a frowning countenance*, would utter those verses, which his Majesty, perfectly remembering, repeated the next day, and many took notice of them. Now, by occasion of the late soreness in his arm, and the doubtfulness what it would prove; especially having, by mischance, fallen into the fire with that arm, the remembrance of the verses began to trouble him."

It appears that these verses were of a threatening nature, since, in a melancholy fit, they were recalled to recollection after an interval of three years; the verses are lost to us, with the letter which contained them.

enumerate the whole of his Majesty's occupations, and every dish that had been placed on the table during the interval. But this courtier was not aware that the monotony which the king occasioned him was not so much in the king himself as in his own volatile spirit.

The table of James I. was a trial of wits, says a more learned courtier, who often partook of these prolonged conversations: those genial and convivial conferences were the recreations of the king, and the means often of advancing those whose talents had then an opportunity of discovering themselves. A life so constant in its pursuits was to have been expected from the temper of him who, at the view of the Bodleian library, exclaimed, "Were I not a king, I would be an university man; and if it were so that I must be a prisoner, I would have no other prison than this library, and be *chained together* with all these goodly authors."*

Study, indeed, became one of the businesses of life with our contemplative monarch; and so zealous was James to form his future successor, that he even seriously engaged in the education of both his sons. James I. offers the singular spectacle of a father who was at once a preceptor and a monarch: it was in this spirit the king composed his "Basilicon Doron; or, His Majesty's Instructions to his dearest Son Henry the Prince," a work of which something more than the intention is great; and he directed the studies of the unfortunate Charles. That both these princes were no common pupils may be fairly attributed to the king himself. Never did the character of a young prince shoot out with nobler promises than Henry; an enthusiast for literature and arms, that prince

* In this well-known exclamation of James I., a witty allusion has been probably overlooked. The king had in his mind the then prevalent custom of securing books by fastening them to the shelves by *chains* long enough to reach to the reading-desks under them.

early showed a great and commanding spirit. Charles was a man of fine taste: he had talents and virtues, errors and misfortunes; but he was not without a spirit equal to the days of his trial.

FACILITY AND COPIOUSNESS OF HIS COMPOSITION.

The mind of James I. had at all times the fulness of a student's, delighting in the facility and copiousness of composition. The king wrote in one week one hundred folio pages of a monitory address to the European sovereigns; and, in as short a time, his apology, sent to the pope and cardinals. These he delivered to the bishops, merely as notes for their use; but they were declared to form of themselves a complete answer. "*Qua felicitate* they were done, let others judge; but *Qua celeritate*, I can tell," says the courtly bishop who collected the king's works, and who is here quoted, not for the compliment he would infer, but for the fact he states. The week's labour of his majesty provoked from Cardinal Perron about one thousand pages in folio, and replies and rejoinders from the learned in Europe.*

* Mr. Lodge, in his "Illustrations of British History," praises and abuses James I. for the very same treatises. Mr. Lodge, dropping the sober character of the antiquary for the smarter one of the critic, tells us, "James had the good fortune to gain the two points he principally aimed at in the publication of these *dull treatises*—the reputation of an acute disputant, and the honour of having Cardinal Bellarmin for an antagonist." Did Mr. Lodge ever read these "dull treatises?" I declare I never have; but I believe these treatises are not dull, from the inference he draws from them: for how any writer can gain the reputation of "an acute disputant" by writing "dull treatises," Mr. Lodge only can explain. It is in this manner, and by unphilosophical critics, that the literary reputation of James has been flourished down by modern pens. It was sure game to attack James I.!

HIS ELOQUENCE.

THE eloquence of James is another feature in the literary character of this monarch. Amid the sycophancy of the court of a learned sovereign some truths will manifest themselves. Bishop Williams, in his funeral eulogy of James I., has praised with warmth the eloquence of the departed monarch, whom he intimately knew; and this was an acquisition of James's, so manifest to all, that the bishop made eloquence essential to the dignity of a monarch; observing, that "it was the want of it that made Moses, in a manner, refuse all government, though offered by God."* He would not have hazarded so peculiar an eulogium, had not the monarch been distinguished by that talent.

Hume first observed of James I., that "the speaker of the House of Commons is usually an eminent man; yet the harangue of his Majesty will always be found much superior to that of the speaker in every parliament during

* This funeral sermon, by laying such a stress on the *eloquence* of James I., it is said, occasioned the disgrace of the zealous bishop; perhaps, also, by the arts of the new courtiers practising on the feelings of the young monarch. It appears that Charles betrayed frequent symptoms of impatience.

This allusion to the *stammering* of Moses was most unlucky; for Charles had this defect in his delivery, which he laboured all his life to correct. In the first speech from the throne, he alludes to it: "Now, because *I am unfit for much speaking*, I mean to bring up the fashion of my predecessors, to have my lord-keeper speak for me in most things." And he closed a speech to the Scottish parliament by saying, that "he does not offer to endear himself by words, *which indeed is not my way.*" This, however, proved to be one of those little circumstances which produce a more important result than is suspected. By this substitution of a lord-keeper instead of the sovereign, he failed in exciting the personal affections of his parliament. Even the most gracious speech from the lips of a lord-keeper is but formally delivered, and coldly received; and Charles had not yet learned that there are no deputies for our feelings.

this reign." His numerous proclamations are evidently wrought by his own hand, and display the pristine vigour of the state of our age of genius. That the state-papers were usually composed by himself, a passage in the Life of the Lord-keeper Williams testifies; and when Sir Edward Conway, who had been bred a soldier, and was even illiterate, became a viscount, and a royal secretary, by the appointment of Buckingham, the king, who in fact wanted no secretary, would often be merry over his imperfect scrawls in writing, and his hacking of sentences in reading, often breaking out in laughter, exclaiming, "Stenny has provided me with a secretary who can neither write nor read, and a groom of my bedchamber who cannot truss my points,"—this latter person having but one hand! It is evident, since Lord Conway, the most inefficient secretary ever king had—and I have myself seen his scrawls—remained many years in office, that James I. required no secretary, and transacted his affairs with his own mind and hand. These habits of business and of study prove that James indulged much less those of indolence, for which he is so gratuitously accused.

HIS WIT.

Amid all the ridicule and contempt in which the intellectual capacity of James I. is involved, this college-pedant, who is imagined to have given in to every species of false wit, and never to have reached beyond quibbles, puns, conceits, and quo-libets,—was in truth a great wit; quick in retort, and happy in illustration; and often delivering opinions with a sententious force. More wit and wisdom from his lips have descended to us than from any other of our sovereigns. One of the malicious writers of his secret history, Sir Anthony Weldon, not only informs us that he was witty, but describes the man-

ner: "He was very witty, and had as many witty jests as any man living: at which he would not smile himself, but deliver them in a grave and serious manner." Thus the king was not only witty, but a dextrous wit: nor is he one of those who are recorded as having only said one good thing in their lives; for his vein was not apt to dry.

His conversations, like those of most literary men, he loved to prolong at table. We find them described by one who had partaken of them:

"The reading of some books before him was very frequent, while he was at his repast; and otherwise he collected knowledge by variety of questions, which he carved out to the capacity of different persons. Methought his hunting humour was not off, while the learned stood about him at his board; he was ever in chase after some disputable doubts, which he would wind and turn about with the most stabbing objections that ever I heard; and was as pleasant and fellow-like, in all these discourses, as with his huntsman in the field. Those who were ripe and weighty in their answers were ever designed for some place of credit or profit." *

SPECIMENS OF HIS HUMOUR, AND OBSERVATIONS ON HUMAN LIFE.

The relics of witticisms and observations on human life, on state affairs, in literature and history, are scattered among contemporary writers, and some are even traditional; I regret that I have not preserved many which occurred in the course of reading. It has happened, however, that a man of genius has preserved for

* Hacket's curious "Life of the Lord-keeper Williams," p. 38, Part II.

posterity some memorials of the wit, the learning, and the sense of the monarch.*

In giving some loose specimens of the wit and capacity of a man, if they are too few, it may be imagined that they are so from their rarity; and if too many, the page swells into a mere collection. But truth is not over-nice to obtain her purpose, and even the common labours she inspires are associated with her pleasures.

Early in life James I. had displayed the talent of apt allusion, and his classical wit on the Spaniards, that "He expected no other favour from them than the courtesy of Polyphemus to Ulysses—to be the last devoured," delighted Elizabeth, and has even entered into our history. Arthur Wilson, at the close of his "Life of James I.," has preserved one of his apothegms, while he censures him for not making timely use of it! "Let that prince, who would beware of conspiracies, be rather jealous of such whom his extraordinary favours have advanced,

* In the Harl. MSS. 7582, Art. 3, one entitled "Crumms fallen from King James's Table; or his Table-Talk, taken by Sir Thomas Overbury. The original being in his own handwriting." This MS. has been, perhaps, imperfectly printed in the "Prince's Cabala, or Mysteries of State," 1715. This Collection of Sir Thomas Overbury was shortened by his unhappy fate, since he perished early in the reign.—Another Harl. MS. contains things "as they were at sundrie times spoken by James I." I have drawn others from the Harl. MSS. 6395. We have also printed, "Wittie Observations, gathered in King James's Ordinary Discourse," 1643; "King James, his Apothegmes or Table-Talk as they were by him delivered occasionally, and by the publisher, his quondam servant, carefully received, by B. A., gent. 4°. in eight leaves, 1643." The collector was Ben^n. Agar, who had gathered them in his youth; "Witty Apothegmes, delivered at several times by King James, King Charles, the Marquis of Worcester," &c., 1658.

The collection of Apothegms formed by Lord Bacon offers many instances of the king's wit and sense. See Lord Bacon's Apothegms new and old; they are numbered to 275 in the edition 1819. Basil Montague, in his edition, has separated what he distinguishes as the spurious ones.

than of those whom his displeasure have discontented. *These* want means to execute their pleasures, but *those* have means at pleasure to execute their desires."—Wilson himself ably develops this important state-observation, by adding, that "Ambition to rule is more vehement than malice to revenge." A pointed reflection, which rivals a maxim of Rochefoucault.

The king observed that, "Very wise men and very fools do little harm; it is the mediocrity of wisdom that troubleth all the world."—He described, by a lively image, the differences which rise in argument: "Men, in arguing, are often carried by the force of words farther asunder than their question was at first; like two ships going out of the same haven, their landing is many times whole countries distant."

One of the great national grievances, as it appeared both to the government and the people, in James's reign, was the perpetual growth of the metropolis; and the nation, like an hypochondriac, was ludicrously terrified that their head was too monstrous for their body, and drew all the moisture of life from the remoter parts. It is amusing to observe the endless and vain precautions employed to stop all new buildings, and to force persons out of town to reside at their country mansions. Proclamations warned and exhorted, but the very interference of prohibition rendered the crowded town more delightful. One of its attendant calamities was the prevalent one of that day, the plague; and one of those state libels, which were early suppressed, or never printed, entitled, "Balaam's Ass," has this passage: "In this deluge of new buildings, we shall be all poisoned with breathing in one another's faces; and your Majesty has most truly said, England will shortly be London, and London, England." It was the popular wish, that country gentlemen should reside more on their estates, and it was on this occasion that the king made that admirable allusion, which has been

in our days repeated in the House of Commons: "Gentlemen resident on their estates were like ships in port—their value and magnitude were felt and acknowledged; but, when at a distance, as their size seemed insignificant, so their worth and importance were not duly estimated." The king abounded with similar observations; for he drew from life more than even from books.

James is reproached for being deficient in political sagacity; notwithstanding that he somewhat prided himself on what he denominated "king's-craft." This is the fate of a pacific and domestic prince!

"A king," said James, "ought to be a preserver of his people, as well of their fortunes as lives, and not a destroyer of his subjects. Were I to make such a war as the King of France doth, with such tyranny on his own subjects—with Protestants on one side, and his soldiers drawn to slaughter on the other,—I would put myself in a monastery all my days after, and repent me that I had brought my subjects to such misery."

That James was an adept in his "king's-craft," by which term he meant the science of politics, but which has been so often misinterpreted in an ill sense, even the confession of such a writer as Sir Anthony Weldon testifies; who acknowledges that "no prince living knew how to make use of men better than King James." He certainly foresaw the spirit of the Commons, and predicted to the prince and Buckingham, events which occurred after his death. When Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex, whom James considered a useful servant, Buckingham sacrificed, as it would appear, to the clamours of a party, James said, "You are making a rod for your own back;" and when Prince Charles was encouraging the frequent petitions of the Commons, James told him, "You will live to have your bellyful of petitions." The following anecdote may serve to prove his political sagacity:—When the Emperor of Germany, instigated by the Pope and his own state-in-

terests, projected a crusade against the Turks, he solicited from James the aid of three thousand Englishmen; the wise and pacific monarch, in return, advised the emperor's ambassador to apply to France and Spain, as being more nearly concerned in this project: but the ambassador very ingeniously argued, that, James being a more remote prince, would more effectually alarm the Turks, from a notion of a general armament of the Christian princes against them. James got rid of the importunate ambassador by observing, that "three thousand Englishmen would do no more hurt to the Turks than fleas to their skins: great attempts may do good by a destruction, but little ones only stir up anger to hurt themselves."

His vein of familiar humour flowed at all times, and his facetiousness was sometimes indulged at the cost of his royalty. In those unhappy differences between him and his parliament, one day mounting his horse, which, though usually sober and quiet, began to bound and prance,—"Sirrah!" exclaimed the king, who seemed to fancy that his favourite prerogative was somewhat resisted on this occasion, "if you be not quiet, I'll send you to the five hundred kings in the lower house: they'll quickly tame you." When one of the Lumleys was pushing on his lineal ascent beyond the patience of the hearers, the king to cut short the tedious descendant of the Lumleys, cries out, "Stop mon! thou needst no more: now I learn that Adam's surname was Lumley!" When Colonel Gray, a military adventurer of that day, just returned from Germany, seemed vain of his accoutrements, on which he had spent his all,—the king, staring at this buckled, belted, sworded, and pistolled, but ruined, martinet, observed, that "this town was so well fortified, that, were it victualled, it might be impregnable."

EVIDENCES OF HIS SAGACITY IN THE DISCOVERY OF TRUTH.

Possessing the talent of eloquence, the quickness of wit, and the diversified knowledge which produced his "Table-talk," we find also many evidences of his sagacity in the discovery of truth, with that patient zeal so honourable to a monarch. When the shipwrights, jealous of Pett, our great naval architect, formed a party against him, the king would judge with his own eyes. Having examined the materials depreciated by Pett's accusers, he declared that "the cross-grain was in the men, not in the timber." The king, on historical evidence, and by what he said in his own works, claims the honour of discovering the gunpowder plot, by the sagacity and reflection with which he solved the enigmatical and ungrammatical letter sent on that occasion. The train of his thoughts has even been preserved to us; and although a loose passage, in a private letter of the Earl of Salisbury, contradicted by another passage in the same letter, would indicate that the earl was the man; yet even Mrs. Macaulay acknowledges the propriety of attributing the discovery to the king's sagacity. Several proofs of his zeal and reflection in the detection of imposture might be adduced; and the reader may, perhaps, be amused at these.

There existed a conspiracy against the Countess of Exeter by Lady Lake, and her daughter, Lady Ross. They had contrived to forge a letter in the Countess's name, in which she confessed all the heavy crimes they accused her of, which were incest, witchcraft, &c.;* and to confirm its authenticity, as the king was curious respecting the place, the time, and the occasion, when the letter was written, their maid swore it was at the countess's house at Wimbledon, and that she had written it at the window

* Camden's "Annals of James I., Kennet II., 652."

near the upper end of the great chamber; and that she (the maid) was hid beneath the tapestry, where she heard the countess read over the letter after writing. The king appeared satisfied with this new testimony; but, unexpectedly, he visited the great chamber at Wimbledon, observed the distance of the window, placed himself behind the hangings, and made the lords in their turn: not one could distinctly hear the voice of a person placed at the window. The king further observed, that the tapestry was two feet short of the ground, and that any one standing behind it must inevitably be discovered. "Oaths cannot confound my sight," exclaimed the king. Having also effectuated other discoveries with a confession of one of the parties, and Sir Thomas Lake being a faithful servant of James, as he had been of Elizabeth, the king, who valued him, desired he would not stand the trial with his wife and daughter; but the old man pleaded that he was a husband and a father, and must fall with them. "It is a fall!" said the king; "your wife is the serpent; your daughter is Eve; and you, poor man, are Adam!"*

The sullen Osborne reluctantly says, "I must confess he was the promptest man living in detecting an imposture." There was a singular impostor in his reign, of whom no one denies the king the merit of detecting the deception—so far was James I. from being credulous, as he is generally supposed to have been. Ridiculous as the affair may appear to us, it had perfectly succeeded with the learned fellows of New College, Oxford, and afterwards with heads as deep; and it required some exertion of the king's philosophical reasoning to pronounce on the deception.

One Haddock, who was desirous of becoming a preach-

* The suit cost Sir Thomas Lake 30,000*l.*; the fines in the star-chamber were always heavy in all reigns. Harris refers to this cause as an evidence of the tyrannic conduct of James I., as if the king was always influenced by personal dislike; but he does not give the story.

er, but had a stuttering and slowness of utterance, which he could not get rid of, took to the study of physic; but recollecting that, when at Winchester, his schoolfellows had told him that he spoke fluently in his sleep, he tried, affecting to be asleep, to form a discourse on physic. Finding that he succeeded, he continued the practice: he then tried divinity, and spoke a good sermon. Having prepared one for the purpose, he sat up in his bed and delivered it so loudly that it attracted attention in the next chamber. It was soon reported that Haddock preached in his sleep; and nothing was heard but inquiries after the *sleeping preacher*, who soon found it his interest to keep up the delusion. He was now considered as a man truly inspired; and he did not in his own mind rate his talents at less worth than the first vacant bishopric. He was brought to court, where the greatest personages anxiously sat up through the night by his bedside. They tried all the maliciousness of Puck to pinch and to stir him: he was without hearing or feeling; but they never departed without an orderly text and sermon; at the close of which, groaning and stretching himself, he pretended to awake, declaring he was unconcious of what had passed. "The king," says Wilson, no flatterer of James, "privately handled him so like a chirurgeon, that he found out the sore." The king was present at one of these sermons, and forbade them; and his reasonings, on this occasion, brought the sleeping preacher on his knees. The king observed, that things studied in the day-time may be dreamed of in the night, but always irregularly, without order; not, as these sermons were, good and learned: as particularly the one preached before his Majesty in his sleep—which he first treated physically, then theologically; "and I observed," said the king, "that he always preaches best when he has the most crowded audience." "Were he allowed to proceed, all slander and treason might pass under colour of being asleep," added the king,

who, notwithstanding his pretended inspiration, awoke the sleeping preacher for ever afterwards.

BASILICON DORON.

THAT treatise of James I., entitled "Basilicon Doron; or, His Majesty's Instructions to his dearest Son Henry the Prince," was composed by the king in Scotland, in the freshness of his studious days; a work, addressed to a prince by a monarch which, in some respects, could only have come from the hands of such a workman. The morality and the politics often retain their curiosity and their value. Our royal author has drawn his principles of government from the classical volumes of antiquity; for then politicians quoted Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. His waters had, indeed, flowed over those beds of ore;* but the growth and vigour of the work comes from the mind of the king himself: he writes for the Prince of of Scotland, and about the Scottish people. On its first appearance Camden has recorded the strong sensation it excited: it was not only admired, but it entered into and won the hearts of men. Harris, forced to acknowledge, in his mean style and with his frigid temper, that "this book contains some tolerable things," omits not to hint that "it might not be his own:" but the claims of James I. are evident from the peculiarity of the style; the period at which it was composed; and by those particular passages stamped with all the individuality of the king himself. The style is remarkable for its profuse sprinkling of Scottish and French words, where the Doric plainness of the one, and the intelligent expression of the other,

* James, early in life, was a fine scholar, and a lover of the ancient historians, as appears from an accidental expression of Buchanan's, in his dedication to James of his "Baptistes;" referring to Sallust, he adds, *apud* TUUM *Salustium*

offer curious instances of the influence of manners over language; the diction of the royal author is a striking evidence of the intermixture of the two nations, and of a court which had marked its divided interests by its own chequered language.

This royal manual still interests a philosophical mind; like one of those antique and curious pictures we sometimes discover in a cabinet,—studied for the costume; yet where the touches of nature are true, although the colouring is brown and faded; but there is a force, and sometimes even a charm, in the ancient simplicity, to which even the delicacy of taste may return, not without pleasure. The king tells his son:—

"Sith all people are naturally inclined to follow their prince's example, in your own person make your wordes and deedes to fight together; and let your own life be a law-book and a mirror to your people, that therein they may read the practice of their own lawes, and see by your image what life they should lead.

"But vnto one faulte is all the common people of this kingdome subject, as well burgh as land; which is, to judge and speak rashly of their prince, setting the commonweale vpon foure props, as wee call it; euer wearying of the present estate, and desirous of nouelties." The remedy the king suggests, "besides the execution of laws that are to be vsed against vnreuerent speakers," is so to rule, as that "the subjects may not only live in suretie and wealth, but be stirred up to open their mouthes in your iust praise."

JAMES THE FIRST'S IDEA OF A TYRANT AND A KING.

The royal author distinguishes a king from a tyrant on their first entrance into the government:—

"A tyrant will enter like a saint, till he find himself fast under foot, and then will suffer his unruly affections to burst forth." He advises the prince to act contrary to Nero, who, at first, "with his tender-hearted wish, *vellem nescire literas*," appeared to lament that he was to execute the laws. He, on the contrary, would have the prince early show "the severitie of justice, which will settle the country, and make them know that ye can strike: this would be but for a time. If otherwise ye kyth (show) your clemencie at the first the offences would soon come to such heapes, and the contempt of you grow so great, that when ye would fall to punish, the number to be punished would exceed the innocent; and ye would, against your nature, be compelled then to wracke manie, whom the chastisement of few in the beginning might have preserved. In this my own dear-bought experience may serve you for a different lesson. For I confess, where I thought (by being gracious at the beginning) to gain all men's heart to a loving and willing obedience, I by the contrarie found the disorder of the countrie, and the loss of my thanks, to be all my reward."

James, in the course of the work, often instructs the prince by his own errors and misfortunes; and certainly one of these was an excess of the kinder impulses in granting favours; there was nothing selfish in his happiness; James seemed to wish that every one around him should participate in the fulness of his own enjoyment. His hand was always open to scatter about him honours and wealth, and not always on unworthy favourites, but often on learned men whose talents he knew well to appreciate. There was a warmth in the king's temper which once he himself well described; he did not like those who pride themselves on their tepid dispositions "I love not one that will never be angry, for as he that is without sorrow is without gladness, so he that is without anger is without love. Give me the heart of a man,

and out of that all his actions shall be acceptable." The king thus addresses the prince:—

On the Choice of Servants and Associates.

"Be not moved with importunities; for the which cause, as also for augmenting your Maiestie, be not so facile of access-giving at all times, as I have been."—In his minority, the choice of his servants had been made by others, "recommending servants unto me, more for serving, in effect, their friends that put them in, than their maister that admitted them, and used them well, at the first rebellion raised against me. Chuse you your own servantes for your own vse, and not for the vse of others; and, since ye must be *communis parens* to all your people, chuse indifferentlie out of all quarters; not respecting other men's appetites, but their own qualities. For as you must command all, so reason would ye should be served of all.—Be a daily watchman over your own servants, that they obey your laws precisely: for how can your laws be kept in the country, if they be broken at your eare!—Bee homelie or strange with them, as ye think their behaviour deserveth and their nature may bear ill.—Employ every man as ye think him qualified, but use not one in all things, lest he wax proud, and be envied by his fellows.—As for the other sort of your companie and servants, they ought to be of perfect age, see they be of a good fame; otherwise what can the people think but that ye have chosen a companion unto you according to your own humour, and so have preferred those men for the love of their vices and crimes, that ye knew them to be guiltie of. For the people, that see you not within, cannot judge of you but according to the outward appearance of your actions and company, which only is subject to their sight."

THEREVOLUTIONISTS OF THAT AGE.

James I. has painted, with vivid touches, the Anti-Monarchists, or revolutionists, of his time.

He describes "their imagined democracie, where they fed themselves with the hope to become *tribuni plebi;* and so, in a popular government, by leading the people by the nose, to bear the sway of all the rule.—Every faction," he adds, "always joined them. I was ofttimes calumniated in their poular sermons, not for any evill or vice in me,* but because I was a king, which they thought the highest evill; and, because they were ashamed to professe this quarrel, they were busie to look narrowly in all my actions, pretending to distinguish the lawfulness of the office from the vice of the person; yet some of them would snapper out well grossly with the trewth of their intentions, informing the people that all kings and princes were naturally enemies to the liberties of the Church; whereby the ignorant were emboldened (as bayards),† to cry the learned and modest out of it: but their parity is the mother of confusion, and enemie to vnitie, which is the mother of order." And it is not without eloquence his Majesty describes these factious Anti-Monarchists, as "Men, whom no deserts can oblige, neither oaths nor promises bind; breathing nothing but sedition and calumnies, aspiring without measure, railing without reason, and making their own imaginations the square of their conscience. I protest, before the great

* The conduct of James I. in Scotland has even extorted praise from one of his bitterest calumniators; for Mrs. Macaulay has said—"His conduct, when King of Scotland, was in many points unexceptionable."

† An old French word, expressing, "A man that gapes or gazes earnestly at a thing; a fly-catcher; a greedy and unmannerly beholder."—Cotgrave.

God, and, since I am here as vpon my testament, it is no place for me to lie in, that ye shall never find with any Hie-land, or Border theeves, greater ingratitude, and more lies and vile perjuries: ye may keep them for trying your patience, as Socrates did an evill wife."

OF THE NOBILITY OF SCOTLAND.

The king makes three great divisions of the Scottish people: the church, the nobility, and the burghers.

Of the nobility, the king counsels the prince to check.

"A fectless arrogant conceit of their greatness and power, drinking in with their very nourish-milk. Teach your nobilitie to keep your lawes, as precisely as the meanest; fear not their orping, or being discontented, as long as ye rule well: for their pretended reformation of princes taketh never effect, but where evil government proceedeth. Acquaint yourself so with all the honest men of your barone and gentlemen, giving access so open and affable, to make their own suites to you themselves, and not to employ the great lordes, their intercessours; so shall ye bring to a measure their monstrous backes. And for their barbarous feïdes (feuds), put the laws to due execution made by mee there-anent; beginning ever rathest at him that yee love best, and is oblished vnto you, to make him an example to the rest. Make all your reformations to begin at your elbow, and so by degrees to the extremities of the land."

He would not, however, that the prince should highly contemn the nobility: "Remember, howe that error brake the king, my grandfather's heart. Consider that vertue followeth oftest noble blood: the more frequently that your court can be garnished with them, as peers and fathers of your land, thinke it the more your honour."

He impresses on the mind of the prince ever to em-

brace the quarrel of the poor and the sufferer, and to remember the honourable title given to his grandfather, in being called "The poor man's king."

OF COLONISING.

James I. had a project of improving the state of those that dwelt in the isles, "who are so utterly barbarous," by intermixing some of the semi-civilised Highlanders, and planting colonies among them of inland subjects.

"I have already made laws against the over-lords, and the chief of their clannes, and it would be no difficultie to danton them; so rooting out, or transporting the barbarous and stubborn sort, and planting civilised in their rooms."

This was as wise a scheme as any modern philosopher could have suggested, and, with the conduct he subsequently pursued in Ireland, may be referred to as splendid proofs of the kingly duties so zealously performed by this monarch.

OF MERCHANTS.

Of merchants, as this king understood the commercial character, he had no honourable notion.

He says, "They think the whole commonwealth ordained for raising them up, and accounting it their lawful gain to enrich themselves upon the losses of the rest of the people."

We are not to censure James I. for his principles of political economy, which then had not assumed the dignity of a science; his rude and simple ideas convey popular truths.

REGULATIONS FOR THE PRINCE'S MANNERS AND HABITS.

The last portion of the "Basilicon Doron" is devoted to domestic regulations for the prince, respecting his manners and habits; which the king calls "the indifferent actions of a man."

"A king is set as one on a stage, whose smallest actions and gestures all the people gazinglie do behold; and, however just in the discharge of his office, yet, if his behaviour be light or dissolute, in indifferent actions, the people, who see but the outward part, conceive pre-occupied conceits of the king's inward intention, which, although with time, the trier of truth, will evanish by the evidence of the contrarie effect yet *interim patitur justus*, and pre-judged conceits will, in the meantime, breed contempt, the mother of rebellion and disorder. Besides," the king adds, "the indifferent actions and behaviour of a man have a certain holding and dependence upon vertue or vice, according as they are used or ruled."

The prince is not to keep regular hours.

"That any time in the four and twentie hours may be alike to you; thereby your diet may be accommodated to your affairs, and not your affairs to your diet."

The prince is to eat in public, "to shew that he loves not to haunt companie, which is one of the marks of a tyrant, and that he delights not to eat privatelie, ashamed of his gluttonie." As a curious instance of the manners of the times, the king advises the prince "to use mostly to eat of reasonablie-grosse and common-meats; not only for making your bodie strong for travel, as that ye may be the hartlier received by your meane subiects in their houses, when their cheere may suffice you, which other-

waies would be imputed to you for pride, and breed coldness and disdain in them."

I have noticed his counsel against the pedantry or other affectations of style in speaking.

He adds, "Let it be plaine, natural, comelie, cleane, short, and sententious."

In his gestures "he is neither to look sillily, like a stupid pedant; nor unsettledly, with an uncouth morgue, like a new-come-over cavalier; not over sparing in your courtesies, for that will be imputed to incivilitie and arrogance; nor yet over prodigal in jowking or nodding at every step, for that forme of being popular becometh better aspiring Absaloms than lawful kings; forming ever your gesture according to your present action; looking gravely, and with a majestie, when ye sit upon judgment, or give audience to embassadors; homely, when ye are in private with your own servants; merrily, when ye are at any pastime, or merry discourse; and let your countenance smell of courage and magnanimity when at the warres. And remember (I say again) to be plaine and sensible in your language; for besides, it is the tongue's office to be the messenger of the mind; it may be thought a point of imbecilitie of spirit in a king to speak obscurely, much more untrewely, as if he stood in awe of any in uttering his thoughts."

Should the prince incline to be an author, the king adds—

"If your engine (genius) spur you to write any workes, either in prose or verse, I cannot but allow you to practise it; but take no longsome works in hande, for distracting you from your calling."

He reminds the prince with dignity and truth,

"Your writes (writings) will remain as the true picture of your minde, to all posterities; if yee would write worthelie, chuse subjects worthie of you." His critical conception of the nature of poetry is its best definition. "If ye write in verse, remember that it is not the

principal part of a poem to rime right, and flow well with many prettie wordes; but the chief commendation of a poem is, that when the verse shall bee taken sundry in prose, it shall be found so ritch in quick inventions and poetick floures, and in fair and pertinent comparisons, as it shall retain the lustre of a poem although in prose."

The king proceeds, touching many curious points concerning the prince's bodily exercises and "house-pastimes." A genuine picture of the customs and manners of the age: our royal author had the eye of an observer, and the thoughtfulness of a sage.

The king closes with the hope that the prince's "natural inclination will have a happie simpathie with these precepts; making the wise man's schoolmaister, which is the example of others, to be your teacher; and not that overlate repentance by your own experience, which is the schoolmaister of fools."

Thus have I opened the book, and I believe, the heart of James I. The volume remains a perpetual witness to posterity of the intellectual capacity and the noble disposition of the royal author.

But this monarch has been unfairly reproached both by the political and religious; as far as these aspersions connect themselves with his character, they enter into our inquiry.

His speeches and his writings are perpetually quoted by democratic writers, with the furious zeal of those who are doing the work of a party; they never separate the character of James from his speculative principles of government; and, such is the odium they have raised against him, that this sovereign has received the execration, or the ridicule, even of those who do not belong to their party. James maintained certain abstract doctrines of the times, and had written on "The Prerogative Royal," and "The Trew Laws of Free Monarchies," as he had on witches and devils. All this verbal despot-

ism is artfully converted into so many acts of despotism itself; and thus they contrive their dramatic exhibition of a blustering tyrant, in the person of a father of his people, who exercised his power without an atom of brutal despotism adhering to it.

THE KING'S IDEA OF THE ROYAL PREROGATIVE.

When James asserted that a king is above the laws, he did not understand this in the popular sense; nor was he the inventor or the reviver of similar doctrines. In all his mysterious flights on the nature of "The Prerogative Royal," James only maintained what Elizabeth and all the Tudors had, as jealously, but more energetically exercised.* Elizabeth left to her successor the royal prerogative strained to its highest pitch, with no means to support a throne which in the succeeding reign was found to be baseless. The king employed the style of absolute power, and, as Harris says, "entertained notions of his prerogative amazingly great, and bordering on impiety." It never occurred to his calumniators, who are always writing, without throwing themselves back into the age of their inquiries, that all the political reveries, the abstract notions, and the metaphysical fancies of James I. arose from his studious desire of being an

* In Sir Symund D'Ewes's "Journals of the Parliament," and in Townshend's "Historical Collections," we trace in some degree Elizabeth's arbitrary power concealed in her prerogative, which she always considered as the dissolving charm in the magical circle of our constitution. But I possess two letters of the French ambassador to Charles IX., written from our court in her reign; who, by means of his secret intercourse with those about her person, details a curious narrative of a royal interview granted to some deputies of the parliament, at that moment refractory, strongly depicting the exalted notions this great sovereign entertained of the prerogative, and which she asserted in stamping her foot

English sovereign, according to the English constitution —for from thence he derived those very ideas.

THE LAWYERS' IDEA OF THE ROYAL PREROGATIVE.

The truth is, that lawyers, in their anxiety to define, or to defend the shadowy limits of the royal prerogative, had contrived some strange and clumsy fictions to describe its powers; their flatteries of the imaginary being, whom they called the sovereign, are more monstrous than all the harmless abstractions of James I.

They describe an English sovereign as a mysterious being, invested with absolute perfection, and a fabulous immortality, whose person was inviolable by its sacredness. A king of England is not subject to death, since the sovereign is a corporation, expressed by the awful plural the OUR and the WE. His majesty is always of full age, though in infancy; and so unlike mortality, the king can do no wrong. Such his ubiquity, that he acts at the same moment in different places; and such the force of his testimony, that whatever the sovereign declares to have passed in his presence, becomes instantly a perpetual record; he serves for his own witness, by the simple subscription of *Teste me ipso;* and he is so absolute in power, beyond the laws, that he quashes them by his negative voice.* Such was the origin of the theoretical prerogative of an ideal sovereign which James I.

* Such are the descriptions of the British sovereign, to be found in Cowell's curious book, entitled "The Interpreter." The reader may further trace the modern genius of Blackstone, with an awful reverence, dignifying the venerable nonsense—and the commentator on Blackstone sometimes labouring to explain the explanations of his master; so obscure, so abstract, and so delicate is the phantom which our ancient lawyers conjured up, and which the moderns cannot lay.

had formed: it was a mere curious abstraction of the schools in the spirit of the age, which was perpetually referring to the mysteries of state and the secrets of empires, and not a principle he was practising to the detriment of the subject.

James I. while he held for his first principle that a sovereign is only accountable to God for the sins of his government, an harmless and even a noble principle in a religious prince, at various times acknowledged that "a king is ordained for procuring the prosperity of his people." In his speech, 1603, he says,

"If you be rich I cannot be poor; if you be happy I cannot but be fortunate. My worldly felicity consists in your prosperity. And that I am a servant is most true, as I am a head and governour of all the people in my dominions. If we take the people as one body, then as the head is ordained for the body and not the body for the head, so must a righteous king know himself to be ordained for his people, and not his people for him."

The truth is always concealed by those writers who are cloaking their antipathy against monarchy, in their declamations against the writings of James I. Authors, who are so often influenced by the opinions of their age, have the melancholy privilege of perpetuating them, and of being cited as authorities for those very opinions, however erroneous.

At this time the true principles of popular liberty, hidden in the constitution, were yet obscure and contested; involved in contradiction, in assertion and recantation; * and they have been established as much by the

* Cowell, equally learned and honest, involved himself in contradictory positions, and was alike prosecuted by the King and the Commons, on opposite principles. The overbearing Coke seems to have aimed at his life, which the lenity of James saved. His work is a testimony of the unsettled principles of liberty at that time; Cowell was compelled to appeal to one part of his book to save himself from the other.

blood as by the ink of our patriots. Some noble spirits in the Commons were then struggling to fix the vacillating principles of our government; but often their private passions were infused into their public feelings; James, who was apt to imagine that these individuals were instigated by a personal enmity in aiming at his mysterious prerogative, and at the same time found their rivals with equal weight opposing the novel opinions, retreated still farther into the depths and arcana of the constitution. Modern writers have viewed the political fancies of this monarch through optical instruments not invented in his days.

When Sir Edward Coke declared that the king's royal prerogative being unlimited and undefined, "was a great overgrown monster;" and, on one occasion, when Coke said before the king, that "his Majesty was defended by the laws,"—James, in anger, told him he spoke foolishly, and he said he was not defended by the laws, but by God (alluding to his "divine right"); and sharply reprimanded him for having spoken irreverently of Sir Thomas Crompton, a civilian; asserting, that Crompton was as good a man as Coke. The fact is, there then existed a rivalry between the civil and the common lawyers. Coke declared that the common law of England was in imminent danger of being perverted; that law which he has enthusiastically described as the perfection of all sense and experience. Coke was strenuously opposed by Lord Bacon and by the civilians, and was at length committed to the Tower (according to a MS. letter of the day, for the cause is obscure in our history), "charged with speaking so in parliament as tended to stir up the subjects' hearts against their sovereign."* Yet in all this we

* The following anecdotes of Lord Chief Justice Coke have not been published. They are extracts from manuscript letters of the times: on that occasion, at first, the patriot did not conduct himself with the firmness of a great spirit.

must not regard James as the despot he is represented: he acted as Elizabeth would have acted, for the sacredness of his own person, and the integrity of the constitu-

Nov. 19, 1616.

"The thunderbolt hath fallen on the Lord Coke, which hath overthrown him from the very roots. The supersedeas was carried to him by Sir George Coppin, who, at the presenting of it, received it with dejection and tears. *Tremor et successio non cadunt in fortem et constantem.* I send you a distich on the Lord Coke—

Jus condere Cocus potuit, sed condere jure
Non potuit; potuit condere jura cocis."

It happened that the name of Coke, or rather Cook, admitted of being punned on, both in Latin and in English; for he was lodged in the Tower, in a room than had once been a kitchen, and as soon as he arrived, one had written on the door, which he read at his entrance—

"This room has long wanted a Cook."

"The Prince interceding lately for *Edward Coke*, his Majesty answered, 'He knew no such man.' When the Prince interceded by the name of Mr. Coke, his Majesty still answered, 'He knew none of that name neither; but he knew there was one Captain Coke, the leader of the faction in parliament.'"

In another letter, Coke appears with greater dignity. When Lord Arundel was sent by the king to Coke, a prisoner in the Tower, to inform him that his Majesty would allow him to consult with eight of the best learned in the law to advise him for his cause, Coke thanked the king, but he knew himself to be accounted to have as much skill in the law as any man in England, and therefore needed no such help, nor feared to be judged by the law. He knew his Majesty might easily find, in such a one as he, whereby to take away his head; but for this he feared not what could be said.

"I have heard you affirm," said Lord Arundel, "that by law, he that should go about to withdraw the subjects' hearts from their king was a traitor." Sir Edward answered, "That he held him an arch-traitor."

James I. said of Coke, "That he had so many shifts that, throw him where you would, he still fell upon his legs."

This affair ended with putting Sir Edward Coke on his knees before the council-table, with an order to retire to a private life, to correct his book of Reports, and occasionally to consult the king himself. This part of Coke's history is fully opened in Mr. Alexander Chalmers's "Biographical Dictionary."

tion. In the same manuscript letter I find that, when at Theobalds, the king, with his usual openness, was discoursing how he designed to govern; and as he would sometimes, like the wits of all nations and times, compress an argument into a play on words,—the king said, "I will govern according to the good of the *common-weal*, but not according to the *common-will!*"

THE KING'S ELEVATED CONCEPTION OF THE KINGLY CHARACTER.

But what were the real thoughts and feelings of this presumed despot concerning the duties of a sovereign? His Platonic conceptions inspired the most exalted feelings; but his gentle nature never led to one act of unfeeling despotism. His sceptre was wreathed with the roses of his fancy: the iron of arbitrary power only struck into the heart in the succeeding reign. James only menaced with an abstract notion; or, in anger, with his own hand would tear out a protestation from the journals of the Commons: and, when he considered a man as past forgiveness, he condemned him to a slight imprisonment; or removed him to a distant employment; or, if an author, like Coke and Cowell, sent him into retirement to correct his works.

In a great court of judicature, when the interference of the royal authority was ardently solicited, the magnanimous monarch replied:—

"Kings ruled by their laws, as God did by the laws of nature; and ought as rarely to put in use their supreme authority as God does his power of working miracles."

Notwithstanding his abstract principles, his knowledge and reflection showed him that there is a crisis in monarchies and a period in empires; and in discriminating between a king and a tyrant, he tells the prince—

"A tyranne's miserable and infamous life armeth in end

his own subjects to become his burreaux; and although this rebellion be ever unlawful on their part, yet is the world so wearied of him, that his fall is little meaned (minded) by the rest of his subiects, and smiled at by his neighbours."

And he desires that the prince, his son, should so perform his royal duties, that, "In case ye fall in the highway, yet it should be with the honourable report and just regret of all honest men." In the dedicatory sonnet to Prince Henry of the "Basilicon Doron," in verses not without elevation, James admonishes the prince to

> Represse the proud, maintaining aye the right;
> Walk always so, as ever in his sight,
> Who guards the godly, plaguing the prophane.

The poems of James I. are the versifications of a man of learning and meditation. Such an one could not fail of producing lines which reflect the mind of their author. I find in a MS. these couplets, which condense an impressive thought on a favourite subject:—

> Crownes have their compasse, length of daies their date,
> Triumphs their tombes, Felicitie her fate;
> Of more than earth, can earth make none partaker;
> But knowledge makes the king most like his Maker.*

These are among the elevated conceptions the king had formed of the character of a sovereign, and the feeling was ever present in his mind. James has preserved an anecdote of Henry VIII., in commenting on it, which serves our purpose:—

"It was strange," said James I., "to look into the life of Henry VIII., how like an epicure he lived! Henry once asked, whether he might be saved? He was answered, 'That he had no cause to fear, having lived so mighty a king.' 'But oh!' said he,'I have lived too like a

* "Harl. MSS.," 6824.

king.' He should rather have said, not like a king—for the office of a king is to do justice and equity; but he only served his sensuality, like a beast."

Henry VII. was the favourite character of James I.; and it was to gratify the king that Lord Bacon wrote the life of this wise and prudent monarch. It is remarkable of James I., that he never mentioned the name of Elizabeth without some expressive epithet of reverence; such as, "The late queen of famous memory;" a circumstance not common among kings, who do not like to remind the world of the reputation of a great predecessor. But it suited the generous temper of that man to extol the greatness he admired, whose philosophic toleration was often known to have pardoned the libel on himself for the redeeming virtue of its epigram. In his forgiving temper, James I. would call such effusions "the superfluities of idle brains."

"THE BOOK OF SPORTS."

But while the mild government of this monarch has been covered with the political odium of arbitrary power, he has also incurred a religious one, from his design of rendering the Sabbath a day for the poor alike of devotion and enjoyment, hitherto practised in England, as it is still throughout Europe. Plays were performed on Sundays at court, in Elizabeth's reign; and yet, "the Protestants of Elizabeth" was the usual expressive phrase to mark those who did most honour to the reformed. The king, returning from Scotland, found the people in Lancashire discontented, from the unusual deprivation of their popular recreations on Sundays and holidays, after the church service. "With our own ears we heard the general complaint of our people." The Catholic priests were busily insinuating among the lower orders that the reformed religion was a sullen deprivation of all mirth and social

amusements, and thus "turning the people's hearts." But while they were denied what the king terms lawful recreations,"* they had substituted more vicious ones: alehouses were more frequented—drunkenness more generae—tale-mongery and sedition, the vices of sedentary idleness, prevailed—while a fanatical gloom was spreading over the country.

The king, whose gaiety of temper instantly sympathised with the multitude, and perhaps alarmed at this new shape which puritanism was assuming, published what is called "The Book of Sports," and which soon obtained the contemptuous term of "The Dancing Book."

On this subject our recent principles have governed our decisions: with our habits formed, and our notions finally adjusted, this singular state-paper has been reprobated by piety; whose zeal, however, is not sufficiently historical. It was one of the state maxims of this philosophic monarch, in his advice to his son,

"To allure the common people to a common amitie among themselves; and that certain daies in the yeere should be appointed for delighting the people with public spectacles of all honest games and exercise of arms; making playes and lawful games in Maie, and good cheare at Christmas; as also for convening of neighbours, for entertaining friendship and heartliness, by honest feasting and merriness; so that the sabbothes be kept holie, and no unlawful pastime be used. This form of contenting the people's minds hath been used in all well-governed republics."

James, therefore, was shocked at the sudden melancholy among the people. In Europe, even among the reformed themselves, the Sabbath, after church-service, was a

* These are enumerated to consist of dancing, archery, leaping, vaulting, May-games, Whitsun-ales, Morris-dances, and the setting up of May-poles, and other manly sports.

festival-day; and the wise monarch could discover no reason why, in his kingdom, it should prove a day of penance and self-denial: but when once this unlucky "Book of Sports" was thrown among the nation, they discovered, to their own astonishment, that everything concerning the nature of the Sabbath was uncertain.

THE SABBATARIAN CONTROVERSY.

And, because they knew nothing, they wrote much. The controversy was carried to an extremity in the succeeding reign. The proper hour of the Sabbath was not agreed on: Was it to commence on the Saturday-eve? Others thought that time, having a circular motion, the point we begin at was not important, provided the due portion be completed. Another declared, in his "Sunday no Sabbath," that it was merely an ecclesiastical day which may be changed at pleasure; as they were about doing it, in the Church of Geneva, to Thursday,—probably from their antipathy to the Catholic Sunday, as the early Christians had anciently changed it from the Jewish Saturday. This had taken place, had the Thursday voters not formed the minority. Another asserted, that Sunday was a working day, and that Saturday was the perpetual Sabbath.* Some deemed the very name of Sunday profaned the Christian mouth, as allusive to the Saxon idolatry of that day being dedicated to the Sun; and hence they sanctified it with the "Lord's-day." Others were strenuous advocates for closely copying the austerity of the Jewish Sabbath, in all the rigour of the Levitical law; forbidding meat to be dressed, houses swept, fires kindled, &c.,—the day of rest was to be a day of mortification. But this spread an alarm, that "the old rotten ceremonial

* Collier's "Ecclesiastical History," vol. ii., p. 758.

law of the Jews, which had been buried in the grave of Jesus," was about to be revived. And so prone is man to the reaction of opinion, that, from observing the Sabbath with a Judaic austerity, some were for rejecting "Lord's-days" altogether; asserting, they needed not any; because, in their elevated holiness, all days to them were Lord's-days.* A popular preacher at the Temple, who was disposed to keep alive a cheerful spirit among the people, yet desirous that the sacred day should not pass like any other, moderated between the parties. He declared it was to be observed with strictness only by "persons of quality."†

One of the chief causes of the civil war is traced to

*Fuller's "Church History," book xi., p. 149. One of the most curious books of this class is Heylin's "History of the Sabbath," a work abounding with uncommon researches; it was written in favour of Charles's declaration for reviving lawful sports on Sundays. Warton, in the *first* edition of Milton's "Juvenile Poems," observed in a note on the Lady's speech, in Comus, verse 177, that "it is owing to the Puritans ever since Cromwell's time that *Sunday* has been made in England a day of gravity and severity: and many a staunch observer of the rites of the Church of England little suspects that he is conforming to the *Calvinism* of an *English Sunday*." It is probable this gave unjust offence to grave heads unfurnished with their own national history, for in the *second edition* Warton cancelled the note. Truth is thus violated. The Puritans, disgusted with the levities and excesses of the age of James and Charles, as is usual on these points, vehemently threw themselves into an opposite direction; but they perhaps advanced too far in converting the Sabbath-day into a sullen and gloomy reserve of pharisaical austerity. Adam Smith, and Paley, in his "Moral and Political Philosophy," vol. ii., p. 73, have taken more enlightened views on this subject.

† "Let servants," he says, "whose hands are ever working, whilst their eyes are waking; let such who all the foregoing week had their cheeks moistened with sweat, and their hands hardened with labour, let such have some recreation on the Lord's-day indulged to them; whilst *persons of quality*, who may be said to keep Sabbath all the week long—I mean, who rest from hard labour—are concerned in conscience to observe the Lord's-day with the greater abstinence from recreations."

the revival of this "Book of Sports." Thus it happened that from the circumstance of our good-tempered monarch discovering the populace in Lancashire discontented, being debarred from their rustic sports—and, exhorting them, out of his *bonhomie* and "fatherly love, which he owed to them all" (as he said), to recover their cheerful habits—he was innocently involving the country in divinity and in civil war. James I. would have started with horror at the "Book of Sports," could he have presciently contemplated the archbishop, and the sovereign who persisted to revive it, dragged to the block. What invisible thread suspend together the most remote events!

The parliament's armies usually chose Sundays for their battles, that the profanation of the day might be expiated by a field-sacrifice, and that the Sabbath-breakers should receive a signal punishment. The opinions of the nature of the Sabbath were, even in the succeeding reign, so opposite and novel, that plays were performed before Charles on Sundays. James I., who knew nothing of such opinions, has been unjustly aspersed by those who live in more settled times, when such matters have been more wisely established than ever they were discussed.*

* It is remarkable of James I. that he never pressed for the performance of any of his proclamations; and his facile disposition made him more tolerant than appears in our history. At this very time, the conduct of a lord mayor of London has been preserved by Wilson, as a proof of the city magistrate's piety, and, it may be added, of his wisdom. It is here adduced as an evidence of the king's usual conduct:—

The king's carriages, removing to Theobalds on the Sabbath, occasioned a great clatter and noise in the time of divine service. The lord-mayor commanded them to be stopped, and the officers of the carriages, returning to the king, made violent complaints. The king, in a rage, swore he thought there had been no more kings in England than himself; and sent a warrant to the lord-mayor to let them pass, which he obeyed, observing.—"While it was in my power, I did my duty but that being taken away by a higher power, it is my duty to

MOTIVES OF THE KING'S AVERSION TO WAR.

The king's aversion to war has been attributed to his pusillanimity—as if personal was the same thing as political courage, and as if a king placed himself in a field of battle by a proclamation for war. The idle tale that James trembled at the mere view of a naked sword, which is produced as an instance of the effects of sympathy over the infant in the womb from his mother's terror at the assassination of Rizzio, is probably not true, yet it serves the purpose of inconsiderate writers to indicate his excessive pusillanimity; but there is another idle tale of an opposite nature which is certainly true:—In passing from Berwick into his new kingdom, the king, with his own hand, "shot out of a cannon so fayre and with so great judgment" as convinced the cannoniers of the king's skill "in great artillery," as Stowe records. It is probable, after all, that James I. was not deficient in personal courage, although this is not of consequence in his literary and political character. Several instances are recorded of his intrepidity. But the absurd charge of his pusillanimity and his pedantry has been carried so far, as to suppose that it affected his character as a sovereign. The warm and hasty Burnet says at once of James I.:—"He was despised by all abroad as a pedant without true judgment, courage, or steadiness." This "pedant," however, had "the true judgment and steadiness" to obtain his favourite purpose, which was the preservation of a continued peace. If James I. was sometimes despised by foreign powers, it was because an insular king, who will not consume the blood and treasure of his people (and

obey." The good sense of the lord-mayor so highly gratified James, that the king complimented him, and thanked him for it. Of such gentleness was the arbitrary power of James composed!

James had neither to spare), may be little regarded on the Continent; the Machiavels of foreign cabinets will look with contempt on the domestic blessings a British sovereign would scatter among his subjects; his presence with the foreigners is only felt in his armies; and they seek to allure him to fight their battles, and to involve him in their interests.

James looked with a cold eye on the military adventurer: he said, "No man gains by war but he that hath not wherewith to live in peace." But there was also a secret motive, which made the king a lover of peace, and which he once thus confidentially opened:—

"A king of England had no reason but to seek always to decline a war; for though the sword was indeed in his hand, the purse was in the people's. One could not go without the other. Suppose a supply were levied to begin the fray, what certainty could he have that he should not want sufficient to make an honourable end? If he called for subsidies, and did not obtain, he must retreat ingloriously. He must beg an alms, with such conditions as would break the heart of majesty, through capitulations that *some members would make, who desire to improve the reputation of their wisdom, by retrenching the dignity of the crown in popular declamations*, and thus he must buy the soldier's pay, or fear the danger of a mutiny."*

JAMES ACKNOWLEDGES HIS DEPENDENCE ON THE COMMONS.—THEIR CONDUCT.

Thus James I., perpetually accused of exercising arbitrary power, confesses a humiliating dependence on the Commons; and, on the whole, at a time when prerogative and privilege were alike indefinite and

* Hacket's "Life of Lord-Keeper Williams," p. 80. The whole is distinguished by italics, as the king's own words.

obscure, the king received from them hard and rigorous usage. A king of peace claimed the indulgence, if not the gratitude, of the people; and the sovereign who was zealous to correct the abuses of his government, was not distinguished by the Commons from him who insolently would perpetuate them.

When the Commons were not in good humour with Elizabeth, or James, they contrived three methods of inactivity, running the time to waste—*nihil agendo*, or *aliud agendo*, or *malè agendo;* doing nothing, doing something else, or doing evilly.* In one of these irksome moments, waiting for subsidies, Elizabeth anxiously inquired of the Speaker, "What had passed in the Lower House?" He replied, "If it please your Majesty—seven weeks." On one of those occasions, when the queen broke into a passion when they urged her to a settlement of the succession, one of the deputies of the Commons informed her Majesty, that "the Commons would never *speak* about a subsidy, or any other matter whatever; and that hitherto nothing but the most trivial discussions had passed in parliament: which was, therefore, a great assembly rendered entirely useless,—and all were desirous of returning home."†

But the more easy and open nature of James I. endured greater hardships: with the habit of studious men, the king had an utter carelessness of money and a generosity of temper, which Hacket, in his Life of the Lord-Keeper Williams, has described. "The king was wont to give like a king, and for the most part to keep one act of liberality warm with the covering of another." He seemed to have had no distinct notions of total amounts; he was once so shocked at the sight of the

* I find this description in a MS. letter of the times.

† From a MS. letter of the French ambassador, La Mothe Fenelon, to Charles IX., then at the court of London, in my possession.

money he had granted away, lying in heaps on a table, that he instantly reduced it to half the sum. It appears that Parliament never granted even the ordinary supplies they had given to his predecessors; his chief revenue was drawn from the customs; yet his debts, of which I find an account in the Parliamentary History, after a reign of twenty-one years, did not amount to 200,000*l.** This monarch could not have been so wasteful of his revenues as it is presumed. James I. was always generous, and left scarcely any debts. He must have lived amidst many self-deprivations; nor was this difficult to practise for this king, for he was a philosopher, indifferent to the common and imaginary wants of the vulgar of royalty. Whenever he threw himself into the arms of his Parliament, they left him without a feeling of his distress. In one of his speeches he says—

"In the last Parliament I laid open the true thoughts of my heart; but I may say, with our Saviour, 'I have piped to you, and you have not danced; I have mourned, and you have not lamented.' I have reigned eighteen years, in which time you have had peace, and I have received far less supply than hath been given to any king since the Conquest."

Thus James, denied the relief he claimed, was forced on wretched expedients, selling patents for monopolies, craving benevolences, or free gifts, and such expedients; the monopolies had been usual in Elizabeth's reign; yet all our historians agree, that his subjects were never grievously oppressed by such occasional levies; this was even the confession of the contemporaries of this monarch. They were every day becoming wealthier by those acts of peace they despised the monarch for maintaining. "The kingdom, since his reign began, was luxuriant in gold and silver, far above the scant of our

* "Parliamentary History," vol. v., p. 147.

fathers who lived before us," are the words of a contemporary.* All flourished about the king, except the king himself. James I. discovered how light and hollow was his boasted "prerogative-royal," which, by its power of dissolving the Parliament, could only keep silent those who had already refused their aid.

A wit of the day described the Parliaments of James by this ludicrous distich:

> Many faults complained of, few things amended,
> A subsidy granted, the Parliament ended.

But this was rarely the fact. Sometimes they addressed James I. by what the king called a "stinging petition;" or, when the ministers, passing over in silence the motion of the Commons, pressed for supplies, the heads of a party replied, that to grant them were to put an end to Parliament. But they practised expedients and contrivances, which comported as little with the dignity of an English senate, as with the majesty of the sovereign.

At a late hour, when not a third part of the house remained, and those who required a fuller house, amid darkness and confusion, were neither seen nor heard, they made a protest,—of which the king approved as little of the ambiguous matter, as the surreptitious means; and it was then, that, with his own hand, he tore the leaf out of the journal.† In the sessions of 1614 the king was still more indignant at their proceedings. He and the Scotch had been vilified by their invectives; and they were menaced by two lawyers, with a "Sicilian vespers, or a Parisian matins." They aimed to reduce the king to beggary, by calling in question a third part of his revenue, contesting his prerogative in levying his customs. On this occasion I find that, publicly in the

* Hacket's "Life of Lord-Keeper Williams."

† "Rushworth," vol. i., p. 54.

Banqueting-house at Whitehall, the king tore all their bills before their faces; and, as not a single act was passed, in the phrase of the day this was called an *addle* Parliament.* Such unhappy proceedings indicated the fatal divisions of the succeeding reign. A meeting of a different complexion once occurred in 1621, late in James's reign. The monopolies were then abolished. The king and the prince shed reciprocal tears in the house; and the prince wept when he brought an affectionate message of thanks from the Commons. The letter-writer says, "It is a day worthy to be kept holiday; some say it shall, but I believe them not." It never was; for even this parliament broke up with the cries of "some tribunitial orators," as James designated the pure and the impure democratic spirits. Smollett remarks in his margin, that the king endeavoured to *cajole* the Commons. Had he known of the royal tears, he had still heightened the phrase. Hard fate of kings! Should ever their tears attest the warmth of honest feelings, they must be thrown out of the pale of humanity: for Francis Osborne, that cynical republican, declares, "that there are as few abominable princes as tolerable kings; because princes must court the public favour before they attain supreme power, and then change their nature!" Such is the egotism of republicanism!

SCANDALOUS CHRONICLES.

The character of James I. has always been taken from certain scandalous chronicles, whose origin requires detection. It is this mud which has darkened and disturbed the clear stream of history. The reigns of Elizabeth and James teemed with libels in church and state from oppo site parties: the idleness of the pacific court of James I.

* From a MS. of the times.

hatched a viperous brood of a less hardy, but perhaps of a more malignant nature, than the Martin Mar-prelates of the preceding reign. Those boldly at once wrote treason, and, in some respects, honestly dared the rope which could only silence Penry and his party; but these only reached to *scandalum magnatum*, and the puny wretches could only have crept into a pillory. In the times of the Commonwealth, when all things were agreeable which vilified our kings, these secret histories were dragged from their lurking holes. The writers are meagre Suetoniuses and Procopiuses; a set of self-elected spies in the court; gossipers, lounging in the same circle; eaves-droppers; pryers into corners; buzzers of reports; and punctual scribes of what the French (so skilful in the profession) technically term *les on dit;* that is, things that might never have happened, although they are recorded: registered for posterity in many a scandalous chronicle, they have been mistaken for histories; and include so many truths and falsehoods, that it becomes unsafe for the historian either to credit or to disbelieve them.*

* Most of these works were meanly printed, and were usually found in a state of filth and rags, and would have perished in their own merited neglect, had they not been recently splendidly reprinted by Sir Walter Scott. Thus the garbage has been cleanly laid on a fashionable epergne, and found quite to the taste of certain lovers of authentic history! Sir Anthony Weldon, clerk of the king's kitchen, in his "Court of King James" has been reproached for gaining much of his scandalous chronicle from the purlieus of the court. For this work and some similar ones, especially "The None-Such Charles," in which it would appear that he had procured materials from the State Paper Office, and for other zealous services to the Parliament, they voted him a grant of 500*l.* "The Five Years of King James," which passes under the name of Sir Fulk Greville, the dignified friend of the romantic Sir Philip Sidney, and is frequently referred to by grave writers, is certainly a Presbyterian's third day's hash—for there are parts copied from Arthur Wilson's "History of James I.," who was himself the pensioner of a disappointed courtier; yet this writer never attacks the personal character of the king, though charged with hav-

Such was the race generated in this court of peace and indolence! And Hacket, in his "Life of the Lord-Keeper Williams," without disguising the fact, tells us that the Lord-Keeper "spared not for cost to purchase the most certain intelligence, by his fee'd pensioners, of *every hour's occurrences at court;* and was wont to say that no man could be a statesman without a great deal of money."

We catch many glimpses of these times in another branch of the same family. When news-books, as the first newspapers were called, did not yet exist to appease the hungering curiosity of the country, a voluminous correspondence was carried on between residents in the

ing scraped up many tales maliciously false. Osborne is a misanthropical politician, who cuts with the most corroding pen that ever rottened a man's name. James was very negligent in dress; graceful appearances did not come, into his studies. Weldon tells us how the king was trussed on horseback, and fixed there like a pedlar's pack or a lump of inanimate matter; the truth is, the king had always an infirmity in his legs. Further, we are told that this ridiculous monarch allowed his hat to remain just as it chanced to be placed on his head. Osborne once saw this unlucky king "in a green hunting-dress, with a feather in his cap, and a horn, instead of a sword, by his side; how suitable to his age, calling, or person, I leave others to judge from his pictures:" and this he bitterly calls "leaving him dressed for posterity!" This is the style which passes for history with some readers. Hume observes that "hunting," which was James's sole recreation, necessary for his health, as a sedentary scholar, "is the cheapest a king can indulge;" and, indeed, the empty coffers of this monarch afforded no other.

These pseudo-histories are alluded to by Arthur Wilson as "monstrous satires against the king's own person, that haunted both court and country," when, in the wantonness of the times, "every little miscarriage, exuberantly branched, so that evil report did often perch on them." Fuller has designated these suspicious scribes as "a generation of the people who, like *moths*, have lurked under the carpets of the council-table, and even like *fleas*, have leaped into the pillows of the prince's bed-chamber; and, to enhance the reputation of their knowledge, thence derived that of all things which were, or were not, ever done or thought of."—*Church History*, book x., p. 87.

metropolis and their country friends: these letters chiefly remain in their MS. state.* Great men then employed a scribe who had a talent this way, and sometimes a confidential friend, to convey to them the secret history of the times; and, on the whole, they are composed by a better sort of writers; for, as they had no other design than to inform their friends of the true state of passing events, they were eager to correct, by subsequent accounts the lies of the day they sometimes sent down. They have preserved some fugitive events useful in historical researches, but their pens are garrulous; and it requires some experience to discover the character of the writers, to be enabled to adopt their opinions and their statements. Little things were, however, great matters to these diurnalists; much time was spent in learning of those at court, who had quarrelled, or were on the point; who were seen to have bit their lips, and looked downcast; who was budding, and whose full-blown flower was drooping: then we have the sudden reconcilement and the anticipated fallings out, with a deal of the *pourquoi* of the *pourquoi*.†

* Mr. Lodge's "Illustrations of British History" is an eminent and elegant work of the *minutiæ historicæ;* as are the more recent volumes of Sir Henry Ellis's valuable collections.

† Some specimens of this sort of correspondence of the idleness of the times may amuse. The learned Mede, to his friend Sir Martin Stuteville, chronicles a fracas:—"I am told of a great falling out between my Lord Treasurer and my Lord Digby, insomuch that they came to *pedlar's blood* and *traitor's blood*. It was about some money which my Lord Digby should have had, which my Lord Treasurer thought too much for the charge of his employment, and said himself could go in as good a fashion for half the sum. But my Lord Digby replies that he could not *peddle* so well as his lordship."

A lively genius sports with a fanciful pen in conveying the same kind of intelligence, and so nice in the shades of curiosity, that he can describe a quarrel before it takes place.

"You know the *primum mobile* of our court (Buckingham), by whose motion all the other spheres must move, or else stand still: the bright

Such was this race of gossipers in the environs of a court, where, steeped in a supine lethargy of peace, corrupting or corrupted, every man stood for himself through a reckless scene of expedients and of compromises.

A PICTURE OF THE AGE FROM A MS. OF THE TIME.

A LONG reign of peace, which had produced wealth in that age, engendered the extremes of luxury and want. Money traders practised the art of decoying the gallant youths of the day into their nets, and transforming, in a certain time, the estates of the country gentlemen into skins of parchment,

> The wax continuing hard, the acres melting.
> MASSINGER.

Projectors and monopolists who had obtained patents for licensing all the inns and alehouses—for being the sole vendors of manufactured articles, such as gold lace, tobacco-pipes, starch, soap, &c., were grinding and cheating the people to an extent which was not at first

sun of our firmament, at whose splendour or glooming all our marygolds of the court open or shut. There are in higher spheres as great as he, but none so glorious. But the king is in progress, and we are far from court. Now to hear certainties. It is told me that my Lord of Pembroke and my Lord of Rochester are so far out, as it is almost come to a quarrel; I know not how true this is, but Sir Thomas Overbury and my Lord of Pembroke have been long jarring, and therefore the other is likely."

Among the numerous MS. letters of this kind, I have often observed the writer uneasy at the scandal he has seasoned his letter with, and concluding earnestly that his letter, after perusal, should be thrown to the flames. A wish which appears to have been rarely complied with; and this may serve as a hint to some to restrain their tattling pens, if they regard their own peace; for, on most occasions of this nature, the letters are rather preserved with peculiar care.

understood, although the practice had existed in the former reign. The gentry, whose family pride would vie with these *nouveaux riches*, exhausted themselves in rival profusion; all crowded to "upstart London," deserting their country mansions, which were now left to the care of "a poor alms-woman, or a bed-rid beadsman."

In that day, this abandonment of the ancient country hospitality for the metropolis, and this breaking-up of old family establishments, crowded London with new and distinct races of idlers, or, as they would now be called, unproductive members of society. From a contemporary manuscript, one of those spirited remonstrances addressed to the king, which it was probably thought not prudent to publish, I shall draw some extracts, as a forcible picture of the manners of the age.* Masters of ancient families, to maintain a mere exterior of magnificence in dress and equipage in the metropolis, were really at the same time hiding themselves in penury: they thrust themselves into lodgings, and "five or six knights, or justices of peace," with all their retinue, became the inmates of a shopkeeper; yet these gentlemen had once "kept the rusty chimneys of two or three houses smoking, and had been the feeders of twenty or forty serving-men: a single page, with a guarded coat, served their turn now.

"Every one strives to be a Diogenes in his house and an emperor in the streets; not caring if they sleep in a tub, so they may be hurried in a coach; giving that allowance to horses and mares that formerly maintained houses full of men; pinching many a belly to paint a few backs, and burying all the treasures of the kingdom into a few citizens' coffers.

* The MS. is entitled "Balaam's Ass, or a True Discoverie touching the Murmurs and Feared Discontents of the Times, directed to King James."—Lansdowne Collection, 209. The writer, throughout, speaks of the king with the highest respect.

"There are now," the writer adds, "twenty thousand masterless men turned off, who know not this night where to lodge, where to eat to-morrow, and ready to undertake any desperate course."

Yet there was still a more turbulent and dangerous race of idlers, in

"A number of younger brothers, of ancient houses, who, nursed up in fulness, pampered in their minority, and left in charge to their elder brothers, who were to be fathers to them, followed them in despair to London, where these untimely-born youths are left so bare, that their whole life's allowance was consumed in one year."

The same manuscript exhibits a full and spirited picture of manners in this long period of peace.

"The gentry are like owls, all feathers and no flesh; all show, and no substance; all fashion, and no feeding; and fit for no service but masks and May-games. The citizens have dealt with them as it is said the Indians are dealt with; they have given them counterfeit brooches and bugle-bracelets for gold and silver;* pins and peacock

* Sir Giles Mompesson and Sir James Mitchell had the monopolies of gold lace, which they sold in a counterfeit state; and not only cheated the people, but, by a mixture of copper, the ornaments made of it are said to have rotted the flesh. As soon as the grievance was shown to James, he expressed his abhorrence of the practice, and even declared that no person connected with the villanous fraud should escape punishment. The brother of his favourite, Buckingham, was known to be one, and with Sir Giles Overreach (as Massinger conceals the name of Mompesson), was compelled to fly the country. The style of James, in his speech, is indeed different from kings' speeches in parliament: he speaks as indignantly as any individual who was personally aggrieved: "Three patents at this time have been complained of, and thought great grievances; my purpose is to strike them all dead, and, that time may not be lost, I will have it done presently. Had these things been complained of to me, before the parliament, I could have done the office of a just king, and have punished them; peradventure more than now ye intend to do. No private person whatsoever, were he ever so dear unto me, shall be

feathers for lands and tenements; gilded coaches and outlandish hobby-horses for goodly castles and ancient mansions; their woods are turned into wardrobes, their leases into laces; and their goods and chattels into guarded coats and gaudy toys. Should your Majesty fly to them for relief, you would fare like those birds that peck at painted fruits; all outside." The writer then describes the affected penurious habits of the grave citizens, who were then preying on the country gentlemen:—"When those big swoln leeches, that have thus sucked them, wear rags, eat roots, speak like jugglers that have reeds in their mouths; look like spittle-men, especially when your Majesty hath occasion to use them; their fat lies in their hearts, their substance is buried in their bowels, and he that will have it must first take their lives. Their study is to get, and their chiefest care to conceal; and most from yourself, gracious sir; not a commodity comes from their hand, but you pay a noble in the pound for *booking*, which they call *forbearing*.* They think it lost time if they double not their principal in two years. They have attractive powders to draw these flies into their claws; they will entice men with honey into their hives, and with wax entangle them;†

respected by me by many degrees as the public good; and I hope, my lords, that ye will do me that right to publish to my people this my heart purposes. Proceed judicially; spare none, where ye find just cause to punish: but remember that laws have not their eyes in their necks, but in their foreheads."—Rushworth, vol. i., p. 26.

* The credit which these knavish traders gave their customers, who could not conveniently pay their money down, was carried to an exorbitant charge; since, even in Elizabeth's reign, it was one of the popular grievances brought into Parliament—it is there called, "A bill against *Double Payments* of Book Debts." One of the country members, who made a speech consisting entirely of proverbs, said, "Pay the reckoning overnight, and you shall not be troubled in the morning."

† In the life of a famous usurer of that day, who died worth 400,000*l.*, an amazing sum at that period, we find numberless expe-

they pack the cards, and their confederates, the lords, deal, by which means no other men have ever good game. They have in a few years laid up riches for many, and yet can never be content to say—*Soul, take thy rest, or hand receive no more; do no more wrong:* but still they labour to join house to house, and land to land. What want they of being kings, but the name? Look into the shires and counties, where, with their purchased lordships and manors, one of their private letters has equal power with your Majesty's privy seal.* It is better to be one of their hinds, than your Majesty's gentleman usher; one of their grooms, than your guards. What care they, if it be called tribute or no, so long as it comes in termly: or whether their chamber be called Exchequer, or the dens of cheaters, so that the money be left there."

This crushing usury seemed to them a real calamity; for although in the present extraordinary age of calculations

dients and contrivances of the money trader, practised on improvident landholders and careless heirs, to entangle them in his nets. He generally contrived to make the wood pay for the land, which he called "making the feathers pay for the goose." He never pressed hard for his loans, but fondly compared his bonds "to infants, which battle best by sleeping;" to battle is to be nourished—a term still retained in the battle-book of the university. I have elsewhere preserved the character and habits of the money-dealer in the age of James I.—See "Curiosities of Literature," 11th Edit., p. 228.

* It is observed, in the same life, that his mortgages, and statutes, and his judgments were so numerous, that his papers would have made a good map of England. A view of the chamber of this usurer is preserved by Massinger, who can only be understood by the modern reader in Mr. Gifford's edition:—

Here lay
A manor, bound fast in a skin of parchment;
Here a sure deed of gift for a market-town,
If not redeem'd this day, which is not in
The unthrift's purse; there being scarce one shire
In Wales or England, where my monies are not
Lent out at usury, the certain hook
To draw in more. MASSINGER'S *City Madam.*

and artificial wealth, we can suffer "a dunghill-breed of men," like Mompesson and his contemptible partner of this reign, to accumulate in a rapid period more than a ducal fortune, without any apparent injury to the public welfare, the result was different then; the legitimate and enlarged principles of commerce were not practised by our citizens in the first era of their prosperity; their absorbing avarice rapidly took in all the exhausting prodigality of the gentry, who were pushed back on the people to prey in their turn on them; those who found their own acres disappearing, became enclosers of commons; this is one of the grievances which Massinger notices, while the writer of the "Five Years of King James" tells us that these discontents between the gentry and the commonality grew out into a petty rebellion; and it appears by Peyton that "divers of the people were hanged up."

ANECDOTES OF THE MANNERS OF THE AGE.

The minute picture of the domestic manners of this age exhibits the results of those extremes of prodigality and avarice which struck observers in that contracted circle which then constituted society. The king's prodigal dispensations of honours and titles seem at first to have been political; for James was a foreigner, and designed to create a nobility, as likewise an inferior order, who might feel a personal attachment for the new monarch; but the facility by which titles were acquired, was one cause which occasioned so many to crowd to the metropolis to enjoy their airy honour by a substantial ruin; knighthood had become so common, that some of the most infamous and criminal characters of this age we

find in that rank.* The young females, driven to necessity by the fashionable ostentation of their parents, were brought to the metropolis as to a market; "where," says a contemporary, "they obtained pensions, or sometimes marriages, by their beauty." When Gondomar, the Spanish ambassador, passed to his house, the ladies were at their balconies on the watch, to make themselves known to him; and it appears that every one of those ladies had sold their favours at a dear rate. Among these are some, "who pretending to be *wits*, as they called them," says Arthur Wilson,† "or had handsome nieces or daughters, drew a great resort to their houses." And it appears that Gondomar, to prevent these conversaziones from too freely touching on Spanish politics, sweetened their silence by his presents.‡ The same

* A statesman may read with advantage Sir Edward Walker on "The inconveniences that have attended the frequent promotions to Titles, since King James came to the crown." Sir Edward appears not to disapprove of these promotions during the first ten years of his reign, but "when alliance to a favourite, riches though gotten in a shop, persons of private estates, and of families whose fathers would have thought themselves highly honoured to have been but knights in Queen Elizabeth's time, were advanced, then the fruits began to appear. The greater nobility were undervalued; the ancient baronage saw inferior families take precedency over them; nobility lost its respect, and a parity in conversation was introduced which in English dispositions begot contempt; the king could not employ them all; some grew envious, some factious, some ingrateful, however obliged, by being once denied."—p. 302.

† One may conjecture, by this expression, that the term of "wits" was then introduced, in the sense we now use it.

‡ Wilson has preserved a characteristic trait of one of the lady wits. When Gondomar one day, in Drury-lane, was passing Lady Jacob's house, she, exposing herself for a salutation from him, he bowed, but in return she only opened her mouth, gaping on him. This was again repeated the following day, when he sent a gentleman to complain of her incivility. She replied, that he had purchased some favours of the ladies at a dear rate, and she had a mouth to be stopped as well as others.

grossness of manners was among the higher females of the age; when we see that grave statesman, Sir Dudley Carleton, narrating the adventures of a bridal night, and all "the petty sorceries," the romping of the "great ladies, who were made shorter by the skirts," we discover their coarse tastes; but when we find the king going to the bed of the bride in his nightgown, to give a reveille-matin and remaining a good time in or upon the bed, "Choose which you will believe;" this bride was not more decent than the ladies who publicly, on their balconies, were soliciting the personal notice of Gondomar.

This coarseness of manners, which still prevailed in the nation, as it had in the court of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, could not but influence the familiar style of their humour and conversation. James I., in the Edict on Duels, employs the expression of *our dearest bedfellow* to designate the queen; and there was no indelicacy attached to this singular expression. Much of that silly and obscene correspondence of James with Buckingham, while it adds one more mortifying instance of "the follies of the wise," must be attributed to this cause.* Are not

* Our wonder and surmises have been often raised at the strange subscriptions of Buckingham to the king,—"Your dog," and James as ingenuously calling him "dog Steenie." But this was not peculiar to Buckingham; James also called the grave Cecil his "little beagle." The Earl of Worcester, writing to Cecil, who had succeeded in his search after one Bywater, the earl says, "If the *king's beagle* can hunt by land as well as he hath done *by water*, we will leave capping of *Jowler*, and cap the *beagle*." The queen, writing to Buckingham to intercede with the king for Rawleigh's life, addresses Buckingham by "My kind Dog." James appears to have been always playing on some whimsical appellative by which he characterised his ministers and favourites, analogous to the notions of a huntsman. Many of our writers, among them Sir Walter Scott, have strangely misconceived these playful appellatives, unconscious of the origin of this familiar humour. The age was used to the coarseness. We did not then excel all Europe, as Addison set the model, in the delicacy of humour; indeed, even so late as Congreve's time, they were discussing its essential distinction from wit.

most of the dramatic works of that day frequently unreadable from this circumstance? As an historian, it would be my duty to show how incredibly gross were the domestic language and the domestic familiarities of kings, queens, lords, and ladies, which were much like the lowest of our populace. We may felicitate ourselves on having escaped the grossness, without, however, extending too far these self-congratulations.

The men were dissolved in all the indolence of life and its wantonness; they prided themselves in traducing their own innocence rather than suffer a lady's name to pass unblemished.* The marriage-tie lost its sacredness amid these disorders of social life. The luxurious idlers of that day were polluted with infamous vices; and Drayton, in the "Mooncalf," has elaborately drawn full-length pictures of the lady and the gentleman of that day, which seem scarcely to have required the darkening tints of satire to be hideous—in one line the Muse describes "the most prodigious birth"—

He's too much woman and She's too much man.

The trades of foppery, in Spanish fashions, suddenly sprung up in this reign, and exhibited new names and new things. Now silk and gold-lace shops first adorned Cheapside, which the continuator of Stowe calls "the beauty of London;" the extraordinary rise in price of these fashionable articles forms a curious contrast with those of the preceding reign. Scarfs, in Elizabeth's time, of thirty shillings value, were now wrought up to as many pounds; and embroidered waistcoats, which in the queen's reign no workman knew how to make worth five pounds, were now so rich and curious as to be cheapened at forty. Stowe has recorded a revolution in shoe-

* The expression of one of these gallants, as preserved by Wilson, cannot be decently given, but is more expressive.—p. 147.

buckles, portentously closing in shoe-roses, which were puffed knots of silk, or of precious embroidery, worn even by men of mean rank, at the cost of more than five pounds, who formerly had worn gilt copper shoe-buckles.

In the new and ruinous excess of the use of tobacco, many consumed three or four hundred pounds a year James, who perceived the inconveniences of this sudden luxury in the nation, tried to discountenance it, although the purpose went to diminish his own scanty revenue. Nor was this attack on the abuse of tobacco peculiar to his majesty, although he has been so ridiculed for it; a contemporary publication has well described the mania and its consequences: "The smoak of fashion hath quite blown away the smoak of hospitalitie, and turned the chimneys of their forefathers into the noses of their children."* The king also reprobated the finical embarrassments of the new fashions, and seldom wore new clothes. When they brought him a Spanish hat, he flung it away with scorn, swearing he never loved them nor their fashions; and when they put roses on his shoes, he swore too, "that they should not make him a ruffe-footed dove; a yard of penny ribbon would serve that turn."

The sudden wealth which seems to have rushed into the nation in this reign of peace, appeared in massy plate and jewels, and in "prodigal marriage-portions, which were grown in fashion among the nobility and gentry, as if the skies had rained plenty." Such are the words of Hacket, in his "Memorial of the Lord-Keeper Williams." Enormous wealth was often accumulated. An usurer died worth 400,000*l.*; Sir Thomas Compton, a citizen, left, it is said, 800,000*l.*, and his heir was so overcome with this sudden irruption of wealth, that he lost his senses; and Cranfield, a citizen, became the Earl of Middlesex.

The continued peace, which produced this rage for

* The "Peace-Maker," 1618.

dress, equipage, and magnificence, appeared in all forms of riot and excess; corruption bred corruption. The industry of the nation was not the commerce of the many, but the arts of money-traders, confined to the suckers of the state; and the unemployed and dissipated, who were every day increasing the population in the capital, were a daring petulant race, described by a contemporary as "persons of great expense, who, having run themselves into debt, were constrained to run into faction; and defend themselves from the danger of the law."* These appear to have enlisted under some show of privilege among the nobility; and the metropolis was often shaken by parties, calling themselves Roaring-boys, Bravadoes, Roysters, and Bonaventures.† Such were some of the turbulent children of peace, whose fiery spirits, could they have found their proper vent, had been soldiers of fortune, as they were younger brothers, distressed often by their own relatives; and wards ruined by their own guardians;‡ all these were clamorous for bold piracies on the Spaniards: a visionary island, and a secret mine, would often disturb the dreams of these unemployed youths, with whom it was no uncommon practice to take a purse on the road. Such felt that—

> In this plenty
> And fat of peace, our young men ne'er were trained
> To martial discipline, and our ships unrigg'd
> Rot in the harbour. MASSINGER.

The idleness which rusts quiet minds effervesces in fiery spirits pent up together; and the loiterers in the environs of a court, surfeiting with peace, were quick at quarrel. It is remarkable, that in the pacific reign of

* "Five Years of King James." Harl. Misc.

† A. Wilson's "Hist. of James I." p. 28.

‡ That ancient oppressive institution of the Court of Wards then existed; and Massinger, the great painter of our domestic manners in this reign, has made it the subject of one of his interesting dramas.

James I. never was so much blood shed in brawls, nor duels so tremendously barbarous. Hume observed this circumstance, and attributes it to "the turn that the romantic chivalry, for which the nation was formerly so renowned, had lately taken." An inference probably drawn from the extraordinary duel between Sir Edward Sackville, afterwards Lord Dorset, and the Lord Bruce.* These two gallant youths had lived as brothers, yet could resolve not to part without destroying each other; the narrative so wonderfully composed by Sackville, still makes us shudder at each blow received and given. Books were published to instruct them by a system of quarrelling, "to teach young gentlemen when they are beforehand and when behindhand;" thus they incensed and incited those youths of hope and promise, whom Lord Bacon, in his charge on duelling, calls, in the language of the poet, *Auroræ filii*, the sons of the morning, —who often were drowned in their own blood! But, on a nearer inspection, when we discover the personal malignity of these hasty quarrels, the coarseness of their manners, and the choice of weapons and places in their mode of butchering each other, we must confess that they rarely partake of the spirit of chivalry. One gentleman biting the ear of a Templar, or switching a poltroon lord; another sending a challenge to fight in a saw-pit; or to strip to their shirts, to mangle each other, were sanguinary duels, which could only have fermented in the disorders of the times, amid that wanton pampered indolence which made them so petulant and pugnacious. Against this evil his Majesty published a voluminous edict, which exhibits many proofs that it was the labour of his own hand, for the same dignity, the same eloquence, the same felicity of illustration, embellish the state-

* It may be found in the popular pages of the "Guardian;" there first printed from a MS. in the library of the Harleys.

papers;* and to remedy it, James, who rarely consented to shed blood, condemned an irascible lord to suffer the ignominy of the gallows.

But, while extortion and monopoly prevailed among the monied men, and a hollow magnificence among the gentry, bribery had tainted even the lords. All were hurrying on in a stream of venality, dissipation, and want; and the nation, amid the prosperity of the kingdom in a long reign of peace, was nourishing in its breast the secret seeds of discontent and turbulence.

From the days of Elizabeth to those of the Charleses, Cabinet transmitted to Cabinet the caution to preserve the kingdom from the evils of an overgrown metropolis. A political hypochondriacism: they imagined the head was becoming too large for the body, drawing to itself

* "A publication of his Majestie's edict and seuere censure against private combats and combatants, &c." 1613. It is a volume of about 150 pages. As a specimen of the royal style, I transcribe two passages:—

"The pride of humours, the libertie of times, the conniuencie of magistrates, together with a kind of prescription of impunity, hath bred ouer all this kingdome, not only an opinion among the weakest, but a constant beleefe among many that desire to be reputed among the wisest, of a certain freedome left to all men vpon earth by nature, as their *birth-right* to defend their reputations with their swords, and to take reuenge of any wrong either offered or apprehended, in that measure which their owne inward passion or affection doth suggest, without any further proofe; so as the challenge be sent in a civil manner, though without leave demanded of the *sovereign*," &c.

The king employs a bold and poetical metaphor to describe duelling —to turn this hawk into a singing-bird, clip its wings, and cage it. "By comparing forraine mischiefes with home-bred accidents, it will not be hard to judge into what region this bolde bird of audacious presumption, in dealing blowes so confidently, will mount, if it bee once let flie, from the breast wherein it lurkes. And therefore it behoveth justice both to keep her still in her own close cage, with care that she learn neuer any other dittie then *Est bene;* but withall, that for preuention of the worst that may fall out, wee clippe her wings, that they grow not too fast. For according to that of the proverb, *It is labour lost to lay nets before the eyes of winged fowles*," &c.—p. 13.

all the moisture of life from the middle and the extremities. A statute against the erection of new buildings was passed by Elizabeth; and from James to his successors, proclamations were continually issued to forbid any growth of the city. This singular prohibition may have originated in their dread of infection from the plague, but it certainly became the policy of a weak and timid government, who dreaded, in the enlargement of the metropolis, the consequent concourse of those they designated as "masterless men,"—sedition was as contagious as the plague among the many. But proclamations were not listened to nor read; houses were continually built, for they were in demand,—and the esquires, with their wives and daughters, hastened to gay or busy London, for a knighthood, a marriage, or a monopoly. The government at length were driven to the desperate "Order in Council" to pull down all new houses within ten miles of the metropolis—and further, to direct the Attorney-General to indict all those sojourners in town who had country houses, and mulct them in ruinous fines. The rural gentry were "to abide in their own counties, and by their housekeeping in those parts were to guide and relieve the meaner people *according to the ancient usage of the English nation.*" The Attorney-General, like all great lawyers, looking through the spectacles of his books, was short-sighted to reach to the new causes and the new effects which were passing around. The wisest laws are but foolish when Time, though not the lawyers, has annulled them. The popular sympathy was, however, with the Attorney-General, for it was imagined that the country was utterly ruined and depopulated by the town.

And so in the view it appeared, and so all the satirists chorused! for in the country the ancient hospitality was not kept up; the crowd of retainers had vanished, the rusty chimneys of the mansion-house hardly smoked

through a Christmas week, while in London all was exorbitantly prosperous; masses of treasure were melted down into every object of magnificence. "And is not this wealth drawn from our acres?" was the outcry of the rural censor. Yet it was clear that the country in no way was impoverished, for the land rose in price; and if manors sometimes changed their lords, they suffered no depreciation. A sudden wealth was diffused in the nation; the arts of commerce were first advancing; the first great ship launched for an Indian voyage, was then named the "Trade's Increase." The town, with its multiplied demands, opened a perpetual market for the country. The money-traders were breeding their hoards as the graziers their flocks; and while the goldsmiths' shops blazed in Cheap, the agriculturists beheld double harvests cover the soil. The innumerable books on agriculture, published during these twenty years of peace is an evidence of the improvement of the country—sustained by the growing capitals of the men in trade. In this progress of domestic conveniency to metropolitan luxury, there was a transition of manners; new objects and new interests, and new modes of life, yet in their incipient state.

The evils of these luxuriant times were of quick growth; and as fast as they sprung, the Father of his people encountered them by his proclamations, which, during long intervals of parliamentary recess, were to be enforced as laws: but they passed away as morning dreams over a happy, but a thoughtless and wanton people.

JAMES THE FIRST DISCOVERS THE DISORDERS AND DISCONTENTS OF A PEACE OF MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS.

The king was himself amazed at the disorders and discontents he at length discovered; and, in one of

his later speeches, has expressed a mournful disappointment:—

"And now, I confess, that when I looked before upon the face of the government, *I thought, as every man would have done*, that the people were never so happy as in my time; but even, as at divers times I have looked upon many of my coppices, riding about them, and they appeared, on the outside, very thick and well-grown unto me, but, when I turned into the midst of them, I found them all bitten within, and full of plains and bare spots; like the apple or pear, fair and smooth without, but when you cleave it asunder, you find it rotten at heart. Even so this kingdom, the *external* government being as good as ever it was, and I am sure as learned judges as ever it had, and I hope as honest administering justice within it; and for peace, both at home and abroad, more settled, and longer lasting, than ever any before; together with as great plenty as ever: so as it may be thought, every man might sit in safety under his own vine and fig-tree," &c., &c.*

But while we see this king of peace surrounded by national grievances, and that "this fair coppice was very thick and well-grown," yet loud in murmurs, to what cause are we to attribute them? Shall we exclaim with Catharine Macaulay against "the despotism of James," and "the intoxication of his power?"—a monarch who did not even enforce the proclamations or edicts his wisdom dictated; † and, as Hume has observed, while vaunting his prerogative, had not a single regiment of guards to maintain it. Must we agree with Hume, and reproach

* Rushworth, vol. i., p. 29; sub anno 1621.

† James I. said, "I will never offer to bring a new custom upon my people without the people's consent; like a good physician, tell them what is amiss, if they will not concur to amend it, yet I have discharged my part." Among the difficulties of this king was that of being a foreigner, and amidst the contending factions of that day the "British Solomon" seems to have been unjustly reproached for his Scottish partialities.

the king with his indolence and love of amusement—"particularly of hunting?" *

THE KING'S PRIVATE LIFE IN HIS OCCASIONAL RETIREMENTS.

The king's occasional retirements to Royston and Newmarket have even been surmised to have borne some analogy to the horrid Capræa of Tiberius; but a witness has accidentally detailed the king's uniform life in these occasional seclusions. James I. withdrew at times from public life, but not from public affairs; and hunting, to which he then gave alternate days, was the cheap amusement and requisite exercise of his sedentary habits: but the chase only occupied a few hours. A part of the day was spent by the king in his private studies: another at his dinners, where he had a reader, and was perpetually sending to Cambridge for books of reference: state affairs were transacted at night; for it was observed, at the time, that his secretaries sat up later at night, in those occasional retirements, than when they were at London.† I have noticed, that the state papers were composed by

* La Boderie, the French Ambassador, complains of the king's frequent absences; but James did not wish too close an intercourse with one who was making a French party about Prince Henry, and whose sole object was to provoke a Spanish war: the king foiled the French intriguer; but has incurred his contempt for being "timid and irresolute." James's cautious neutrality was no merit in the Frenchman's eye.

La Boderie resided at our court from 1606 to 1611, and his "Ambassades," in 5 vols., are interesting in English history. The most satirical accounts of the domestic life of James, especially in his unguarded hours of boisterous merriment, are found in the correspondence of the French ambassadors. They studied to flavour their dish, made of spy and gossip, to the taste of their master. Henry IV. never forgave James for his adherence to Spain and peace, instead of France and warlike designs.

† Hacket's Scrinia Reserata, Part I., p. 27.

himself; that he wrote letters on important occasions without consulting any one; and that he derived little aid from his secretaries. James was probably never indolent; but the uniform life and sedentary habits of literary men usually incur this reproach from those real idlers who bustle in a life of nothingness. While no one loved more the still-life of peace than this studious monarch, whose habits formed an agreeable combination of the contemplative and the active life, study and business—no king more zealously tried to keep down the growing abuses of his government, by personally concerning himself in the protection of the subject.*

* As evidences of this zeal for reform, I throw into this note some extracts from the MS. letters of contemporaries.—Of the king's interference between the judges of two courts about prohibitions, Sir Dudley Carleton gives this account:—"The king played the best part in collecting arguments on both sides, and concluded that he saw much endeavour to draw water to their several mills; and advised them to take moderate courses, whereby the good of the subject might be more respected than their particular jurisdictions. The king sat also at the Admiralty, to look himself into certain disorders of government there; he told the lawyers 'he would leave hunting of hares, and hunt them in their quirks and subtilities, with which the subject had been too long abused.'"—MS. Letter of Sir Dudley Carleton.

In "Winwood's Memorials of State" there is a letter from Lord Northampton, who was present at one of these strict examinations of the king; and his language is warm with admiration: the letter being a private one, can hardly be suspected of court flattery. "His Majesty hath in person, with the greatest dexterity of wit and strength of argument that mine ears ever heard, compounded between the parties of the civil and ecclesiastical courts, who begin to comply, by the king's sweet temper, on points that were held to be incompatible."—Winwood's Mem. iii., p. 54.

In his progresses through the country, if any complained of having received injury from any of the court, the king punished, or had satisfaction made to the wronged, immediately.

DISCREPANCIES OF OPINION AMONG THE DECRIERS OF JAMES THE FIRST.

Let us detect, among the modern decriers of the character of James I., those contradictory opinions, which start out in the same page; for the conviction of truth flashed on the eyes of those who systematically vilified him, and must often have pained them; while it embarrassed and confused those, who, being of no party, yet had adopted the popular notions. Even Hume is at variance with himself; for he censures James for his indolence, "which prevented him making any progress in the practice of foreign politics, and diminished that regard which all the neighbouring nations had paid to England during the reign of his predecessor." p. 29. Yet this philosopher observes afterwards, on the military character of Prince Henry, at p. 63, that "had he lived, he had probably promoted *the glory, perhaps not the felicity, of his people.* The unhappy prepossession of men in favour of ambition, &c., engages them into such pursuits *as destroy their own peace, and that of the rest of mankind.*" This is true philosophy, however politicians may comment, and however the military may command the state. Had Hume, with all the sweetness of his temper, been a philosopher on the throne, himself had probably incurred the censure he passed on James I. Another important contradiction in Hume deserves detection. The king, it seems, "boasted of his management of Ireland as his masterpiece." According to the accounts of Sir John Davies, whose political works are still read, and whom Hume quotes, James I. "in the space of nine years made greater advances towards the reformation of that kingdom than had been effected in more than four centuries;" on this Hume adds that the king's "*vanity* in this particular was not without foundation." Thus in describing that wisest act of

a sovereign, the art of humanising his ruder subjects by colonisation, so unfortunate is James, that even his most skilful apologist, influenced by popular prepossessions, employs a degrading epithet—and yet he, who had indulged a sarcasm on the *vanity* of James, in closing his general view of his wise administration in Ireland, is carried away by his nobler feelings.—"Such were the arts," exclaims the historian, "by which James introduced humanity and justice among a people who had ever been buried in the most profound barbarism. Noble cares! much superior to the vain and criminal glory of conquests." Let us add, that had the genius of James the First been warlike, had he commanded a battle to be fought and a victory to be celebrated, popular historians, the panders of ambition, had adorned their pages with bloody trophies; but the peace the monarch cultivated; the wisdom which dictated the plan of civilisation; and the persevering arts which put it into practice—these are the still virtues which give no motion to the *spectacle* of the historian, and are even forgotten in his pages.

What were the painful feelings of Catharine Macaulay, in summing up the character of James the First. The king has even extorted from her a confession, that "his conduct in Scotland was unexceptionable," but "despicable in his Britannic government." To account for this seeming change in a man who, from his first to his last day, was always the same, required a more sober historian. She tells us also, he affected "a sententious wit;" but she adds, that it consisted "only of quaint and stale conceits." We need not take the word of Mrs. Macaulay, since we have so much of this "sententious wit" recorded, of which probably she knew little. Forced to confess that James's education had been "a more learned one than is usually bestowed on princes," we find how useless it is to educate princes at all; for this "more learned education" made this prince "more than commonly deficient

in all the points he pretended to have any knowledge of." This incredible result gives no encouragement for a prince, having a Buchanan for his tutor. Smollett, having compiled the popular accusations of the "vanity, the prejudices, the littleness of soul," of this abused monarch, surprises one in the same page by discovering enough good qualities to make something more than a tolerable king. "His reign, though ignoble to himself, was happy to his people, who were enriched by commerce, felt no severe impositions, while they made considerable progress in their liberties." So that, on the whole, the nation appears not to have had all the reason they have so fully exercised in deriding and vilifying a sovereign, who had made them prosperous at the price of making himself contemptible! I shall notice another writer, of an amiable character, as an evidence of the influence of popular prejudice, and the effect of truth.

When James went to Denmark to fetch his queen, he passed part of his time among the learned; but such was his habitual attention in studying the duties of a sovereign, that he closely attended the Danish courts of justice; and Daines Barrington, in his curious "Observations on the Statutes," mentions, that the king borrowed from the Danish code three statutes for the punishment of criminals. But so provocative of sarcasm is the ill-used name of this monarch, that our author could not but shrewdly observe, that James "spent more time in those courts than in attending upon his destined consort." Yet this is not true: the king was jovial there, and was as indulgent a husband as he was a father. Osborne even censures James for once giving marks of his uxoriousness!* But while Daines Barrington degrades, by unmerited ridicule, the honourable employment of the "British Solomon," he becomes himself per-

* See "Curiosities of Literature," vol. iii., p. 334.

plexed at the truth that flashes on his eyes. He expresses the most perfect admiration of James the First, whose statutes he declares "deserve much to be enforced; nor do I find any one which hath the least tendency to extend the prerogative, or abridge the liberties and rights of his subjects." He who came to scoff remained to pray. Thus a lawyer, in examining the laws of James the First, concludes by approaching nearer to the truth: the step was a bold one! He says, "*It is at present a sort of fashion* to suppose that this king, because he was a pedant, had no real understanding, or merit." Had Daines Barrington been asked for proofs of the pedantry of James the First, he had been still more perplexed; but what can be more convincing than a lawyer, on a review of the character of James the First, being struck, as he tells us, by "his desire of being instructed in the English law, and holding frequent conferences for this purpose with the most eminent lawyers,—as Sir Edward Coke, and others!" Such was the monarch whose character was perpetually reproached for indolent habits, and for exercising arbitrary power! Even Mr. Brodie, the vehement adversary of the Stuarts, quotes and admires James's prescient decision on the character of Laud in that remarkable conversation with Buckingham and Prince Charles recorded by Hacket.*

But let us leave these moderns perpetuating traditional prejudices, and often to the fiftieth echo, still sounding with no voice of its own, to learn what the unprejudiced contemporaries of James I. thought of the cause of the disorders of their age. They were alike struck by the wisdom and the zeal of the monarch, and the prevalent discontents of this long reign of peace. At first, says the continuator of Stowe, all ranks but those "who were settled in piracy," as he designates the cormorants of

* Brodie's "History of British Empire," vol. ii., pp. 244, 411.

war, and curiously enumerates their classes, "were right joyful of the peace; but, in a few years afterwards, all the benefits were generally forgotten, and the happiness of the general peace of the most part contemned." The honest annalist accounts for this unexpected result by the natural reflection—"Such is the world's corruption, and man's vile ingratitude."* My philosophy enables me to advance but little beyond. A learned contemporary, Sir Symond D'Ewes, in his manuscript diary, notices the death of the monarch, whom he calls "our learned and peaceable sovereign."—"It did not a little amaze me to see all men generally slight and disregard the loss of so mild and gentle a prince, which made me even to feel, that the ensuing times might yet render his loss more sensible, and his memory more dear unto posterity." Sir Symond censures the king for not engaging in the German war to support the Palsgrave, and maintain "the true church of God;" but deeper politicians have applauded the king for avoiding a war, in which he could not essentially have served the interests of the rash prince who had assumed the title of King of Bohemia.† "Yet," adds Sir Symond, "if we consider his virtues and his learning, his augmenting the liberties of the English, rather than his oppressing them by any unlimited or illegal taxes and corrosions, his death deserved more sorrow and condolement from his subjects than it found."‡

Another contemporary author, Wilson, has not ill-traced the generations of this continued peace—"peace begot plenty, plenty begot ease and wantonness, and ease and wantonness begot poetry, and poetry swelled

* Stowe's Annals, p. 845.

† See Sir Edward Walker's "Hist. Discourses," p. 321; and Barrington's "Observ. on the Statutes," who says, "For this he deserves the highest praise and commendation from a nation of islanders."

‡ Harl. MSS. 646.

out into that bulk in this king's time which begot monstrous satyrs." Such were the lascivious times, which dissolving the ranks of society in a general corruption, created on one part the imaginary and unlimited wants of prosperity; and on the other produced the riotous children of indolence, and the turbulent adventurers of want. The rank luxuriance of this reign was a steaming hot-bed of peace, which proved to be the seed-plot of that revolution which was reserved for the unfortunate son.

In the subsequent reign a poet seems to have taken a retrospective view of the age of peace of James I. contemplating on its results in his own disastrous times—

> States that never know
> A change but in their growth, which a long peace
> Hath brought unto perfection, are like steel,
> Which being neglected will consume itself
> With its own rust; so doth Security
> Eat through the hearts of states, while they are sleeping
> And lulled into false quiet.
>
> NABB'S *Hannibal and Scipio.*

SUMMARY OF HIS CHARACTER.

THUS the continued peace of James I. had calamities of its own! Are we to attribute them to the king? It has been usual with us, in the solemn expiations of our history, to convert the sovereign into the scape-goat for the people; the historian, like the priest of the Hebrews, laying his hands on Azazel,* the curses of the multitude are heaped on that devoted head. And thus the historian conveniently solves all ambiguous events.

The character of James I. is a moral phenomenon, a singularity of a complex nature. We see that we cannot

* The Hebrew name, which Calmet translates *Bouc Emissaire*, and we *Scape Goat*, or rather *Escape Goat.*

trust to those modern writers who have passed their censures upon him, however just may be those very censures; for when we look narrowly into their representations, as surely we find, perhaps without an exception, that an invective never closes without some unexpected mitigating circumstance, or qualifying abatement. At the moment of inflicting the censure, some recollection in opposition to what is asserted passes in the mind, and to approximate to Truth, they offer a discrepancy, a self-contradiction. James must always be condemned on a system, while his apology is only allowed the benefit of a parenthesis.

How it has happened that our luckless crowned philosopher has been the common mark at which so many quivers have been emptied, should be quite obvious when so many causes were operating against him. The shifting positions into which he was cast, and the ambiguity of his character, will unriddle the enigma of his life. Contrarieties cease to be contradictions when operated on by external causes.

James was two persons in one, frequently opposed to each other. He was an antithesis in human nature—or even a solecism. We possess ample evidence of his shrewdness and of his simplicity; we find the lofty regal style mingled with his familiar bonhommie. Warm, hasty, and volatile, yet with the most patient zeal to disentangle involved deception; such gravity in sense, such levity in humour; such wariness and such indiscretion; such mystery and such openness—all these must have often thrown his Majesty into some awkward dilemmas. He was a man of abstract speculation in the theory of human affairs; too witty or too aphoristic, he never seemed at a loss to decide, but too careless, perhaps too infirm, ever to come to a decision, he leaned on others. He shrunk from the council-table; he had that distaste for the routine of business which studious seden-

tary men are too apt to indulge; and imagined that his health, which he said was the health of the kingdom, depended on the alternate days which he devoted to the chase; Royston and Theobalds were more delectable than a deputation from the Commons, or the Court at Whitehall.

It has not always been arbitrary power which has forced the people in the dread circle of their fate, seditions, rebellions, and civil wars; nor always oppressive taxation which has given rise to public grievances. Such were not the crimes of James the First. Amid the full blessings of peace, we find how the people are prone to corrupt themselves, and how a philosopher on the throne, the father of his people, may live without exciting gratitude, and die without inspiring regret—unregarded, unremembered!

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